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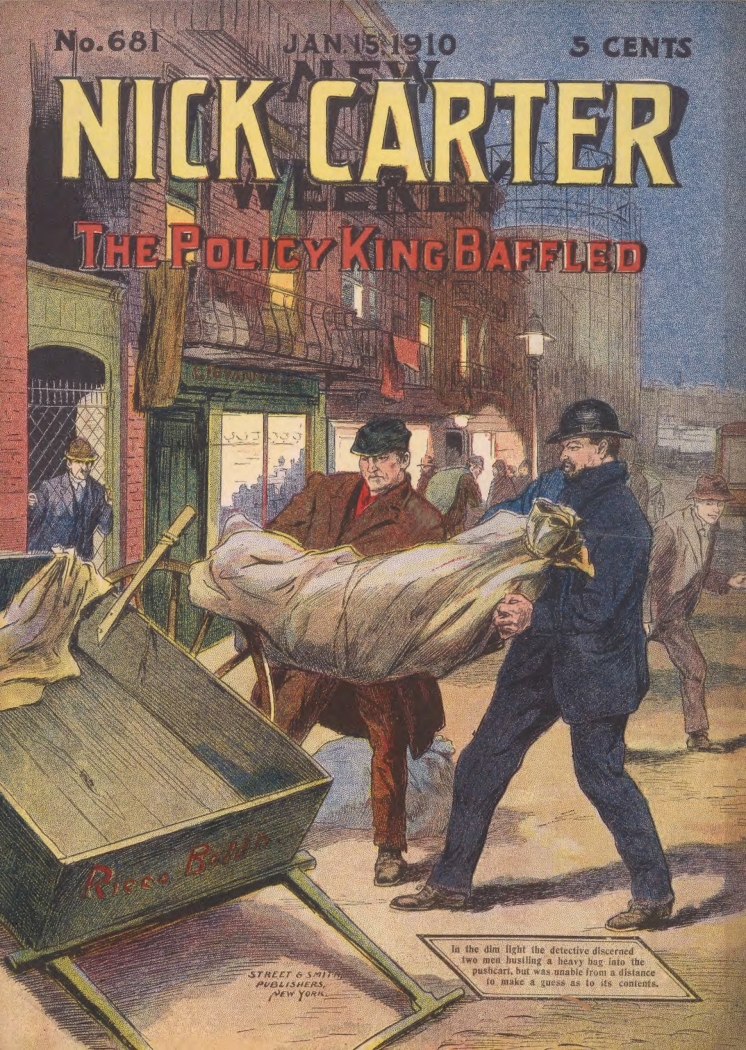
# NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

## THE POLICY KING BAFFLED




In the dim light the detective discerned two men hustling a heavy bag into the pushcart, but was unable from a distance to make a guess as to its contents.

NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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# The Policy King Baffled;

## OR,

## NICK CARTER'S DAZZLING MOVE.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

### CHAPTER I.

PATSY IS PUZZLED.

"Say, is that really Nick Carter?"

"That's what," answered Patsy Garvan, one of the renowned detective's clever young assistants.

"What did he mean when he said to me that I came near being jugged for a crime that I didn't commit, because I *did* commit a little misdemeanor?"

The person who asked this question was Joe McNally—a thin, unhealthy-looking fellow, with a tiny black mustache, and eyes set so near together that each seemed to consider that the other would bear watching. Before answering, Patsy studied his questioner.

McNally had drawn Carter's young assistant aside as they came out of Dawley's billiard saloon on lower Second Avenue, before which several uniformed policemen were holding a curious and excited crowd back. Nick had just caused the arrest of Dawley himself, the keeper of the place, and a notorious agent for Dennis Haloran, "the policy king," on the charge of receiving stolen goods.

Nick and Patsy had been present when Dawley had bought from an ignorant Italian lad, named Sylvester Deculto, for a hundred dollars, a diamond necklace said to be worth forty thousand!

The necklace was the property of Mrs. Johnstone Ridler, a wealthy resident of Fifth Avenue, who had lost the gems in a very peculiar way. Her little girl, Nealie, a child of four, had taken the necklace, unseen by anybody but Mrs. Ridler's maid, from her mother's dressing table, and, sitting on the floor playing with a big French doll that she had broken, thrust the necklace into the aperture where the doll's arm had been torn off.

The child was too small to realize what was the matter when the jewels were missed until, at the suggestion of Nick Carter, she was asked the question. Meanwhile the broken doll had been carried to a "doll hospital" kept by a queer old Irishman, an old-time friend of Patsy's, named Jerry Mellen, in East Fourth Street.

Mrs. Ridler's maid, Maria Deculto, had told her brother, Sylvester, who worked for a coal and wood dealer across the street from the doll surgeon, about the necklace. Neither of the Italians realized the great value of the gems; they thought to steal them and sell them, to get money to play policy with, for Maria Deculto was a "policy fiend." Sylvester broke into the kitchen door of Jerry Mellen's little flat, in broad day, knocked the doll surgeon senseless, and stole the doll, less than an hour after it had been left in Jerry's care.

When Nick Carter and his assistants were drawn into the case Sylvester succeeded for a time in throwing suspicion upon a ne'er-do-well in the neighborhood—a fellow who lived precariously without any regular occupation, and who was a confirmed victim of policy. This was the Joe McNally that now drew

Patsy aside, while the plain-clothes men from headquarters were holding Dawley and Sylvester for the police wagon that was clanging down the avenue.

It was plain that McNally, the ne'er-do-well, was much shaken by the excitement of the arrest in the billiard saloon. He had gone there as usual to put down his money—and that of certain other foolish patrons of the game who intrusted him with their money—with Dawley, and had been playing a game of pool with Patsy when the raid had been made.

Nick was going himself to the station to make formal complaint against the prisoners, and it was at the famous detective that the shaking Joe now looked and pointed, as he asked Patsy the question as to what Nick meant.

"Well, McNally," said Garvan, who, although he had no use for the fellow, rather pitied him after all, "you were in bad on this, whether you knew it or not. You were hanging about the house down there on Fourth Street the day Uncle Jerry Mellen was clouted over the head and robbed, and you came within an ace of being arrested for it—see?"

"Me?" gasped McNally, his unhealthy palor increasing. "Why, I never hurt nobody!"

"You wouldn't have the pluck to knock over an old man that didn't see you coming, mebbe," returned Patsy, with disgust; "but you've done harm enough in your time, McNally. And you're doing it right along."

"Me?" demanded the fellow again.

"Yes, you! You were going around that tenement the other day when Uncle Jerry was hurt, getting foolish folks to put their hard-earned money down on policy drawings. You're a 'bug' yourself, and you lure other people into the same habits of cheap gambling. That's what Nick Carter meant. If you hadn't been down there, committing a misdemeanor by taking policy bets for Dawley, you wouldn't have been suspected of robbing Uncle Jerry."

"How do you know——" began McNally.

"Can it, cull!" broke in Garvan. "I know all about you from Sam Boss. You come nearer to bein' fi' cents' worth of nixwurst than any guy I ever saw."

"That Sam Boss has got it in for me," grumbled McNally.

"And with good reason. His wife is your aunt, and she stands for you. You have got her to playing policy, too, and Sam is sore because she has used money he gave her to play the rotten game. I wonder he don't break you in two!" declared Patsy.

McNally scowled and slunk away. Patsy turned and passed through the crowd. He did not notice that Joe McNally was hailed before he had gone twenty feet from the door of the raided billiard saloon.

The man who spoke to him looked really out of place in the roughly dressed crowd that had gathered to see the police take away "Bug" Dawley and Sylvester Deculto. He wore a shiny silk hat and a great fur-lined overcoat that covered him from neck to heels. He smoked a big cigar, and as he took this from his lips to speak with Joe, a diamond flashed on the little finger of his right hand.

He was a tall man, but in this handsome coat he looked bulky, too; however, he was a skinny specimen of humanity. His countenance was bony, with the bluish-white skin drawn so tightly over the framework of the face that it reminded one unpleasantly of a bare skull.

McNally touched his hat to this richly dressed man and showed by both word and manner much deference in his presence. The stranger asked first of all what was the cause of the arrest, and McNally told him quickly.

"Was the place pulled by Goddard's gumshoes?" queried the thin man, scowling.

"No, sir. This isn't an attack on the policy players," whispered McNally. "But I heard that guy they call Nick Carter——"

"Carter! Nick Carter? Is he in this?" and the tone of the man showed that he was startled, although his ugly face did not change its expression.

"Yes. That's him over there."

"So it is! I did not recognize him before. What is he doing, mixing in this row?" demanded the man in the fur coat.

"It's his row, I guess," said McNally. "He has had Dawley and the dago arrested. And I heard him say to that fellow I was just speakin' to——"

"Who is he?" demanded the other sharply.

"They call him Garvan. He's one of Nick Carter's men."

"Patsy Garvan. Yes, I've heard of him," muttered the other.

"Well, I heard Carter tell this Patsy Garvan that he considered the arrest of Dawley a blow at the policy game."

"Oh, he does, eh?" returned the fur-coated one, his lips closing tightly, and his yellow eyes flashing balefully.

"And more'n that!" whispered McNally eagerly. "I heard him say that he'd get 'the Policy King' himself right, some day. He'd put him away, he said, if he could! That Nick Carter seems to have it in for us all down here. I'd like to give him what's coming to him!"

The man in the fur coat made no comment. He laid his beringed hand on McNally's shoulder, drew him out of the crowd, and, with his thin lips close to the young man's ear, whispered several swift sentences into it. They stood thus, McNally listening and the man in the fur coat evidently instructing him, for some minutes.

Meanwhile Patsy Garvan had strolled down into Fourth Street again and stepped into the doll hospital to pass the time of day with Jerry Mellen, who was not yet out of bed, to which the blow the Italian boy struck had sent him.

When Patsy came out of the old Irishman's rooms he was approached by a tot of a girl who was play-

ing in the hall. She looked up at him sharply, with her head on one side like a bird, and asked:

"Ith you Mithter Garvan?"

"That's what they call me—sometimes," admitted Patsy, smiling down upon her.

"Mith' Both, on the top floor, wanth to thee you," lisped the child.

"Mrs. Boss?" queried Patsy, in surprise. He had called on the Boss family one evening, during his inquiry anent McNally and the lost diamond necklace, and had unfortunately been the cause of a disagreement between Mayme Boss, who was a flighty, shallow little woman, and her husband, big Sam Boss, the truckman.

Patsy's questions at that time had revealed to Sam Boss the fact that his wife was still playing policy "gigs," and that the ne'er-do-well nephew of his wife, McNally, was coming to the house frequently to take the money Mrs. Boss wished to play around to Dawley's.

"Are you sure it was Mrs. Boss wanted to see me?" Patsy asked of the little girl.

"Thure! Mith' Both," she said, and immediately ran out of the house.

Patsy grew more and more puzzled as he mounted the three flights of stairs and tried to figure out in his mind the meaning of the message.

He knocked at the door of the flat occupied by the Bosses, still puzzled. A voice called to him to "Come in!" and he turned the knob, entered the kitchen, and pushed the door shut behind him. There was nobody in sight. The kitchen seemed to be empty, and Patsy did not hear the movement of anybody in the flat.

In a moment—almost the instant the door latch clicked behind him—the young man did distinguish a sound—and one that amazed and puzzled him more than all else.

A key was turned in the lock of the door by which he had entered the flat! He was locked in from without.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE POLICY KING TAKES A TRICK.

It was after mid-afternoon, but Chickering Carter, the first assistant of Nick, came, stretching and yawning, into the latter's office on the second floor of the detective's Madison Avenue residence. Nick was sitting behind the big, flat-topped desk-table, busy with papers before him, but he looked up to smile at his assistant.

"Sorry to have to rouse you out about that Ridler necklace matter this morning, Chick—especially after you had stood guard over Johnstone Ridler's residence all night. But Maria Deculto had to be arrested, and I did not wish to have her taken inside Mr. Ridler's house; his serving people are on the verge of a revolt, anyway, he tells me, because of the unwisdom shown in the methods of the regular police, and of the first private detective whom he engaged to find his wife's necklace. By the way, you got Maria all right, didn't you?"

"Sure," said Chick, with another half-suppressed yawn. "I knew her from the description we had. She is a cool one, Nick. She was as calm as a summer's day when I got her before the lieutenant at the station house and he took her pedigree. I had her held as you said—refusing her any communication with anybody outside the station for a few hours; but, of course, the charge is only vagrancy. I doubt if you can prove much against her, unless you try to go into the conspiracy phase of it. She'd make a mighty good witness if she could be got to talk."

"I'll have to think it over," said Nick. "I don't know just what use to make of Maria. I doubt if she could be made to turn State's evidence against her brother. But if she would——"

"It would help a whole lot in the prosecution of that Dawley," said Chick quickly. "He'll claim, of course, that he had no further connection with Sylvester Deculto than that the dago swept out his place on Second Avenue, and that he brought him this necklace, which he, Dawley, thought was a pretty good imitation of a high-priced necklace, and offered to sell it to him for a hundred dollars."

"That's about what his defense will be," admitted Nick thoughtfully.

"But if Maria could be made to talk the light cast upon this charge against Dawley would be much more illuminating in the minds of a jury, eh?"

"Exactly," said Nick. "This Italian lady's maid of Mrs. Ridler is a very important figure in the case if——"

His speech was stayed by a sharp ring of the telephone bell at his elbow. Nick reached for the instrument and put the receiver to his ear.

"That you, Carter?" said a voice.

"At your service," replied Nick. "Who is it?"

"This is Lieutenant Caltaine, of the —th Precinct station. It's all right, I suppose, about that woman?"

"What woman?" queried Nick.

"The Deculto woman?"

Nick straightened up in his chair and was alert in a moment.

"How's that?" he demanded. "What is the matter with her?"

"Why—nothing."

"Well, what do you mean?"

"How about her, I mean?" demanded the police lieutenant, evidently as puzzled by Nick's words as the latter was by his. "Chick said for us to hold her——"

"Well, that's right."

"But I understood she was to be held here until it came time to take her to night court, at least?"

"What do you mean? Have you let her go?" cried Nick.

"Of course not!" said the other, in a tone of dis-

gust. "But Chick called us up from headquarters and said send her down, so we did it."

"Who called you up?" demanded Nick.

"Chick Carter."

"And from police headquarters?"

"Sure. Didn't I tell you?"

"And told you to send the woman down?"

"Yes."

"Has she gone?"

"Certainly—fifteen minutes ago."

"In a wagon?"

"No. Chick said they were in a hurry for her. The other arrests in the case had been made, and they wanted to put the woman on the gridiron at once."

"Indeed! But she didn't go in the regular way?"

"How did she go?"

"Why, Chick sent one of your machines for her, and there were two plainclothes man in the car besides your driver."

"My chauffeur—Danny?"

"Of course—the little Mick. Say! what is this—a joke, or a hold-up, Carter? You're getting my goat with your questions."

"Tie your goat for a while, Bill," advised Nick quietly, "until we get a little more information out of you. I understand that you let the woman go because Chick requested it, and Chick telephoned you from headquarters—eh?"

At this, Chickering started up with an exclamation of wonder, and demanded:

"What's that about me, Nick?"

His chief put up a warning hand, still listening at the phone. The reply to Nick's last query over the wire had been "Yes."

"How long before the car arrived at your station for the woman did Chick speak to you on the phone, lieutenant?" asked Nick.

"Oh, only a few minutes. Chick said the car was already well on its way when he got me on the wire."

"Didn't give you any time to think it over, eh?"

"What do you mean, Carter? Isn't it all right?"

"That's what I am trying to get at. You say that Chick telephoned you himself?"

"He did."

"You heard his voice?"

"I sure did—and recognized it."

"Well, a voice over the wire isn't always to be recognized," muttered Nick. Then he went on: "You are sure it was from police headquarters that Chick spoke?"

"I never!" cried Chick, starting up again. "Who is that dub, Nick? I haven't been in police headquarters for a week!"

Nick paid no heed to his assistant at the moment. The lieutenant had replied:

"Of course I know three hundred Mulberry called me up. Von Hegan is in charge at the board at this time of day, and he said Chick Carter wanted to speak with me. Then I heard Chick. And I've told you what he said, and what I did. Now, isn't it all right?"

"If you thought it was all right, why did you call me?" demanded Nick quickly.

"Why—er—well, because of two things," said the lieutenant slowly. "Chick was so positive that you'd attend to this woman's case yourself, that I began to wonder why he took it upon himself to order her brought downtown after all. And then, the two ducks from the Central Office were new to me."

"You didn't know them?"

"Never saw either of them before. One was a short fellow with eyeglasses and a brush of close-clipped black hair; the other was tall and sandy-complexioned. Do you know any pair that travel together who look like that? There's a lot of new fellows in plain clothes that I have never seen."

"I don't recognize them at this moment," said Nick dryly, "but I suppose they had something besides their looks to recommend them when they walked in on you?"

"Of course, they had their badges and the proper papers for the transference of the prisoner."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Nick, and this time he *was* surprised.

"Of course. Do you think I'm a lunkhead entirely?" demanded Lieutenant Caltaine, with disgust.

"Well, how about this man of mine in the car, too—or, did he come into the station?"

"No. I saw him out in the car, and the plainclothes men called him 'Danny.' Oh, I couldn't mistake Danny! I know him well."

"He'll be complimented," murmured Nick.

"Say! why don't you answer?" demanded the lieutenant, in a tone of exasperation.

"Give me an opening and I will," said Nick.

"All right. Have it your own way."

"You say that Chick telephoned you from police headquarters—how long ago?"

"Less than half an hour."

"Well, Chick is sitting at my elbow here, in my office, and to my knowledge has not been downtown this afternoon. He says he hasn't been at three hundred Mulberry Street for a week. It was not his voice you heard. And I am sure that Danny, my chauffeur, has not lent himself, or my car, to the police to-day. Lieutenant, somebody has been playing horse with you."

"*Not It can't be!*" excitedly shouted the lieutenant.

"I am not hoaxing you," said Nick quietly. "But somebody else has—and it looks like a serious hoax to me, lieutenant."

"I'm going to call up police headquarters," declared the frightened Caltaine. "Von Hegan——"

"Wait!" commanded Nick. "I will come right over and see you. Don't ring up three hundred Mulberry just yet. Wait till I come. I won't be half an hour."

"Hurry!" begged the police lieutenant. "I can see a picture of myself shooing mosquitoes out of the

main-traveled ways of Staten Island, if nothing worse, if I have been flimflammed in this affair."

Nick dropped the receiver onto the hook and faced his excited and interested first assistant. His explanation to Chick was both brief and illuminating.

"And," he said, in conclusion, "we have got to move lively. You can see that somebody with a great deal of power, plenty of men to work with, and a cast-steel nerve, has done this. No ordinary friend of the Italians, Sylvester and Maria Deculto, has come to their rescue. We can be pretty sure that they had no friends up to the moment they were arrested in connection with a case that included Mr. 'Bug' Dawley in its roster of prisoners.

"Maria Deculto is considered dangerous as a witness by those who are interested in Dawley. It's a cinch, Chick. If Dawley wasn't such a big man in the policy game, and if it wasn't plain that more or less about the game, and how it is used to rob the poor of New York, would come out in Dawley's forthcoming trial, little attention would be paid to this Italian woman.

"But just as you and I agreed, Maria may be made a very important witness. Somebody else saw that fact as clearly as we do. Who would have interest enough and power enough to pull off this game that has very evidently been played on Lieutenant Caltaine?"

"You mean Denny Haloran himself!" ejaculated Chick.

"I mean the Policy King," agreed Nick. "And I'll tell you something that I hadn't got to when the phone interrupted me just now. While we were waiting to put Dawley and Sylvester in the wagon down there in Second Avenue, I saw Haloran himself."

"In the crowd?"

"Quite by accident, I suppose. But he lives on Twelfth Street, I believe."

"He does," agreed Chick.

"I knew the fellow, in his big fur coat and silk hat. He is a walking example for the poor, foolish people, who play the game—it an example ever did such people any good! There certainly is money in policy, Chick."

"Sure. And Denny Haloran's got most of it."

"So it appears. And Denny Haloran has the means, and the power, and the men, and the nerve, to pull off this fake that has been worked on Caltaine. By the way, do you know Von Hegan, the man he speaks of, at headquarters?"

"No. Never saw him that I know of. But he may know me," said Chick.

"And again, he may not! Go down there, Chick, and see if Von Hegan knows you. And if you can find out who worked at headquarters to pull off this trick, so much the better. Meanwhile, I'll put out for the station and get further particulars."

"But the woman, Nick! What about her?" demanded Chick, as his chief got briskly up and started for the door.

"One thing I'm sure about, Chick," chuckled the other. "When you get to three hundred Mulberry Street, you won't find her!"

## CHAPTER III.

### A HOT TRAIL.

Nick Carter knew that Danny had gone over to the garage to overhaul one of the machines. The people who had worked this hoax on Caltaine in the —th Precinct station must be quite familiar with Nick's assistants, and probably knew Nick himself. One of them had played the part of Chickering Carter at police headquarters, and another evidently had made himself up to look near enough like Danny to be taken for that young fellow by Lieutenant Caltaine.

Nick told Joseph, the detective's confidential servant, to tell Danny to get around to the police station named as quickly as possible, with one of the cars. He walked the few blocks to the rendezvous himself.

When he came into the station he saw a very pale and worried countenance peering over the top of the high desk. Lieutenant Caltaine had had time to get thoroughly rattled.

"Great heavens, Carter!" he gasped. "I'm glad you have come. I was on the verge of calling up headquarters, whether or no. I believe every moment I delay will tell against me."

"Don't do it—yet," advised Nick, coming through the gate and stepping up beside the officer. "You have waited so long a few minutes more will neither make nor break you."

"Don't say anything about 'break,' Carter. It's too significant," groaned Caltaine.

"Pluck up your spirit, lieutenant."

"I haven't got any. I'm all in. I can see my finish—"

"Stop it! Let's get at the facts."

"I gave them to you over the wire."

"Not all. What's on the blotter about this affair?"

"Oh, I haven't had time to make any note of the woman being taken away yet——"

"You haven't?" cried Nick, with satisfaction.

"No."

"Well, what did you set down when Chick brought the woman in?"

"The usual record, with the addition that the arrest was made at your request and the woman held in connection with a case you had worked up. In fact, the whole responsibility is on your shoulders for that," said Caltaine hopelessly. "The commissioner will stand for what you do; but me——"

Words failed him. Nick was not in the mood to commiserate further, however. Instead he asked:

"And not a word down yet about the transference of the prisoner?"

"No, Mr. Carter."

"Let me see the papers they brought you," said the detective.

Caltaine did so. The order for transferring Maria Deculto from the —th Precinct to police headquarters was made out in due form on police stationery, and seemed to be signed by the proper officials. But Nick had seen many such papers, and he was familiar with the names of the officials who signed and countersigned such orders. Those officers, he knew, could not have been bribed to do any crooked work.

"You have similar papers handy, Caltaine?" he said, when he had examined Maria Deculto's papers carefully.

"Yes."

"Get some please."

The lieutenant took from the safe a bundle of such documents, and Nick selected several. He spread these out on the desk beside those which had caused the lieutenant to give up the custody of Maria Deculto.

"Oh, they're all right," said Caltaine. "They read as straight as a string, and the signatures are there."

"They read all right," admitted Nick; "but—the signatures are not there."

"What's that?" the lieutenant cried.

"At least, they are not the real signatures of McCafferty and Wigram. Look again, man!" exclaimed Nick. "Don't you see that those names are traced on the papers? Somebody had a real set of transference papers in his possession and a pair of blanks. The blanks were filled in—any clerkly hand would do for that, do you see?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the excited Caltaine.

"But the signatures were traced first and then filled in with the same colored ink. It was done in a hurry and it's not a very good job, Caltaine. I am surprised at your accepting the papers so easily on that point."

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the lieutenant. "What does it matter? They've got me with the goods, anyway. I don't stand any more chance before the commissioner than a plain drunk and disorderly!"

"Hold on!" exclaimed Nick, as the lieutenant was about to fold up the falsified papers with the others. "Let me have those."

"These fake papers?"

"Yes."

"But that won't do me any good," objected Caltaine: "I won't have anything to show for the prisoner if I do!"

"Exactly. But I will give you a receipt for her, if you like," said Nick coolly.

"What's that, Mr. Carter?" cried the lieutenant.

"See here," said Nick, rather pitying the young official. "As it happens, procrastination was a good thing on this occasion. You hadn't got to putting down on the blotter the transfer of Maria Deculto to headquarters. Don't do it!"

"Don't do it?" repeated Caltaine. "What do you mean? What good will that do me? The account of her being arrested is there in black and white, and a call will be made for her, for appearance in the night court, or at headquarters."

"No, it won't," declared Nick quietly.

"Why not?"

"I will simply give you a receipt for her. You enter on the blotter that I took her away. She went in my car with my chauffeur, you say?" and Nick chuckled. "However, we won't worry about an unimportant misstatement in so important a case. I assume all responsibility. She was my prisoner. I released her, we will say, and I'll fix it at headquarters so that there will never be any question raised about her. The case is not closed, and I considered it a good move to give the woman her freedom. She was arrested by one of my assistants by mistake. There you have it!" said Nick Carter cheerfully. "And thoughts of suicide needn't keep you awake to-night, Caltaine."

The lieutenant turned to the great detective and seized his hand—and with a grip that meant something!

"Carter! You—you're one of the best fellows who ever lived. I—I never could have imagined such a way out of it. I—I tell you, things have looked pretty black to me for the last hour. You don't know—you can't realize——"

Caltaine choked, but was too much of a man to wipe the tears away that came into his eyes.

"I didn't tell you, Carter, but it's Molly and the kiddies that were worrying me."

"Say no more," advised Nick kindly. "I can understand just how nervous and wrought up you must have been getting since you woke up to the difficulty you were in. I'm going to keep these papers for further reference. You may be called upon some time to identify them, but that identification won't get you into trouble."

"I'll do anything you say, Mr. Carter," declared Caltaine warmly.

"All right. No more of this, then. But tell me, as near as you can remember, how those fellows looked and spoke."

"The guys I fell for?"

"Yes. The two men who claimed to be Central Office detectives."

"And they looked it, all right, all right!" declared the lieutenant, shaking his head. "They knew their way around, and never slipped a cog during our conversation. As I told you, one was tall, the other short. The tall one was sandy-complexioned, with a little mustache and light hair. He was kind of a fixy-looking man—his hair plastered down just so, with the parting laid out by a surveyor's chain, his hands manicured; he wore spats over patent-leather shoes, and a colored vest. The other guy was short and wore eyeglasses, had a black mustache and short black hair, kind of a pugilistic-looking fellow, with deep chest and muscular arms."

"Have you a good acquaintance with the Gallery?" asked Nick.

"No, I haven't, Carter. I've been thinking since that mebbe both those gay birds had their mugs down there at headquarters, and that I was a sure-enough 'fall guy' to let them get away with this thing. But it all came about so natural. The fellow who phoned me sounded like Chick——"

"In the first place, the man at headquarters told you that Chick was going to speak to you—didn't he?"

"Yes. But Von Hegan is straight—straight as a string."

"Probably; but it seems that Chick doesn't know him, and probably Von Hegan doesn't know Chick. But whoever worked the game from that end walked in and told Von Hegan to call you up and say that Chick Carter wanted to speak to you."

"Of course he did!"

"And so you expected to hear Chick's voice! Of course, it was easy then to believe that the man who told you to let the woman go was Chick."

"I presume that's so," murmured Caltaine.

"Now, did the woman show that she knew them when she was brought out?"

"Not at all! I don't believe she knew anything about the game. She was rescued in spite of herself, Carter," and the lieutenant smiled ruefully.

"They treated her just as though they were the real thing, and she was an ordinary prisoner?"

"Yes. They didn't handcuff her, of course. They would not have put the bracelets on any female prisoner who was as quiet and well behaved as she."

"Right!" admitted Nick.

"When the papers were passed and she was ready, they took her quietly out to the automobile. I looked through the window and saw your man, Danny——"

"Here he is now, Caltaine," chuckled Nick, seeing the door open and his chauffeur enter the station. "Say it to his face!"

Danny, in his leather jacket and leggings, and with the visor of his cap turned up to reveal his face, walked up to the bar and looked in a puzzled way from Nick to the police officer.

"What is it?" he demanded. "What's he saying about me, chief?"

"Why, Lieutenant Caltaine thinks you were around here in my car an hour or more ago, with a couple of Central Office sharps," said Nick, amused.

"Not me!" returned Danny. "I ain't been in this station since my cousin Joe broke Foley's window on Third Avenue and I had to come over and get the kid out."

"I didn't say you were in the office, Danny," said Caltaine; "but if it wasn't you I saw cranking up that automobile out there—— Why, by Jove! that's the very machine!" exclaimed the lieutenant, looking through the window and seeing Nick's Panhard standing before the door of the station.

"Get out!" ejaculated Danny, in further surprise, but Nick remarked:

"One point to the good! So those fellows had a Panhard like mine, did they?"

"I'd swear it was the same machine," declared the lieutenant.

"But I haven't been around here. And this machine hasn't been used for a week, I'll swear," said Danny.

"The chauffeur looked enough like you, Danny, to be your reflection in the looking-glass," declared Caltaine. "The car looks the same, too. And those guys called you—I mean their driver—'Danny.'"

"It was done to fool you, of course, Caltaine," said Nick Carter. "And it only goes to show that whoever pulled this thing off knew more than they should know about me, and about my assistants and my affairs. Well, we must get busy. Did you notice which way they drove from this station?"

"They started east."

"Of course. I don't blame you much for being fooled, Caltaine. Those fellows, knowing I was in your precinct, figured that you would know a good deal about me and my helpers. They certainly played a shrewd game on you. But I bet the next time you'll be mighty sure everything is strictly according to Hoyle before you let go of a prisoner."

"I will, indeed, Mr. Carter," declared the lieutenant, with feeling.

"Now, Caltaine, was there anybody else around the station when they were here?"

"Nobody but Johnny Dooley, the doorman. He's out to his supper just now; he has to get it early, you know."

"I'll want to see him later, perhaps. But we won't waste any more time here just now. Those fellows didn't get away from here more than three-quarters of an hour ago. It's really a hot trail. We should pick up some information about them outside. They have a Panhard machine; there is a woman with them; the chauffeur looks like Danny. Come on, my boy," added Nick, smiling at the angry chauffeur. "You certainly will have some satisfaction in catching these fellows, eh?"

"You can bet I will!" returned Danny emphatically. "I'd like to get me grip on the feller that's got gall enough to make up like me!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### CHICK IS INTERESTED.

Chick Carter felt something of the personal interest that Danny showed in this affair. Somebody had represented himself in Chick's character, and Nick Carter's chief assistant wanted particularly to know who the fellow was!

Chick had several good friends around police headquarters. He knew Sergeant Griffin, and McCafferty, and Bill Dunlap, and a lot of the old stand-bys; but during the recent upheavals in police circles there had

been brought down to the central office a lot of new men who did not know either Chick or his chief.

Of late Nick and his assistants had often been called into cases by the police commissioner himself. Although this gentleman's predecessor had built up an excellent traffic squad, and had trained the rank and file of the police force like a military organization, he had left the detective bureau as he found it—in a demoralized state.

Chick was at 300 Mulberry Street within an hour of the time Caltaine had called Nick Carter from the —th Precinct station. He walked through the main corridor and turned into the room where the general switchboard of the telephone department was placed. The man in charge Chick saw he did not know from Adam!

Van Hegan was a new man on the job. It was doubtful if he yet knew all the men who daily had business in the building.

"Will you call up Mr. Nicholas Carter's house for me?" said Chick, in a matter-of-fact tone, and added the telephone number.

Von Hegan turned to the transmitter and quickly sent the request to the Central Station in Nick's district. Then the policeman looked at Chick and said:

"Who will I say wants to speak with him?"

"Oh! don't you know my name, Mr. Von Hegan?" inquired Chick, as though much surprised. "I am Chickering Carter."

Von Hegan turned slowly and stared at the speaker for a moment in speechless amazement. Chick knew, before he spoke, that whoever had played the trick on the telephone man had "pulled it off on the raw," as the slang saying was; that unknown individual had not even tried to appear like Chick Carter!

"You're not Carter," said the policeman crisply. "What kind of a gag is this you're trying to work on me?"

"I beg your pardon," returned Nick's chief assistant, drawing out his card case and presenting his own particular pasteboard. "Unless my name has been changed by the Legislature—and without my approval —since I left home an hour ago, 'Chickering Carter' is certainly my cognomen, and no other person's."

"But, hang it, man! I've had one Chick Carter in here using this phone to-day."

"You have?" repeated Chick, and with every indication of surprise.

"Yes, I have. And, by Jove! if he wasn't you—I mean, if he isn't Chick Carter——"

"I can assure you right now that I am the only one and original, blown-in-the-bottle, patented and copyrighted article of that name—and no substituted or 'just as good' preparation will go for me. I am Chick Carter," concluded Chick impressively.

"But—but, man alive!" gasped Von Hegan, at last rising to the heights of excitement that the occasion called for. "If you are Chick Carter, and the other fellow was not, there's something queer been worked on me—and I'm just waking up to it!"

Tell me what's happened? What did this fellow want who represented himself as 'Chick Carter'? What a gall he had!"

"He had more than that," cried Von Hegan. "Great Scotland! There'll be trouble over this. I can see my finish—and—— By thunder! What about the fellow at the —th Precinct station?"

"Come, come," said Chick quietly. "You're getting me mixed in my dates myself. Never mind that call I gave you. Forget it for the time. Let me hear all about this guy who had the unmitigated nerve to walk in here and say he was me."

"No, no, Mr. Carter," said Von Hegan, with sudden seriousness and growing desperately pale. "There is something very wrong about this. It is not a matter for laughing—no. Wait!"

He turned to the board again, punched a peg or two into place, and in a minute Chick heard him get connection with the —th Precinct station.

"Hello! who is this?" asked Von Hegan.

"Yes. It is Lieutenant Caltaine?"

"All right. You're in command, are you? You are the same person I called up for Chick Carter an hour and a half ago—or more? Yes? Of course. Very well. That fellow—er—Carter ordered a woman released, or exchanged—— What is that you say? Nick Carter himself was in to see about it, and it's all right? Oh! ve-ry—well!"

Von Hegan turned and stared at Chickering with the sweat pouring down his face and immense relief beginning to dawn in his eyes.

"What do you say to that?" he gasped.

"Nothing. If Nick was there to see Caltaine—he knows the lieutenant well—we needn't worry any more about the crack this stranger made down here, passing himself off for me," declared Chick cheerfully.

"Well, I am relieved!" cried Von Hegan, mopping his brow.

"Sure you would be! But about this guy you fell for—what does he look like? Anybody introduce him to you? Tell me all about it," urged Chick.

"Well, I tell you," said the police officer, "I had heard something about this arrest—or two arrests, I believe it was—that Nick Carter made downtown this morning?"

"There were two; an Italian boy named Deculto, brother of the woman we took uptown, and 'Bug' Dawley."

"Right. And that arrest of Dawley kicked up some dust around these corners, friend," remarked Von Hegan, looking narrowly at Chick.

"I reckon."

"The news got out, and I hear there was a dozen bailmen rushing around offering to go any amount on his bond. They thought it was a policy case—see?"

"Naturally."

"But it wasn't?"

"It was a dead-open-and-shut case of Dawley tak-

ing stolen goods and paying for them. The money was passed. The dago stole the diamonds, and Dawley paid a hundred plunks for them. Nick saw him do it. It's as clear a case as ever was put into the district attorney's hands. Why! I don't see how the grand jury can fail to indict the fellow."

"Mebbe not. But there's an awful lot of funny things happen in this little old burg," grumbled Von Hegan. "At any rate, Dawley's got Denny Haloran, and all he stands for, behind him."

"I know," said Chick, nodding.

"So, of course, it rattled up the dry bones around here when the news of the 'pull' came in. There were a bunch of fellows out there in the corridor talking about it. I don't know them all. Some of 'em were cops and some were not. I don't know everybody around this joint yet, and I'm free to say so. But I heard some things that was said, and I knew that part of the bunch were politicians and other guys who thought that they could put the whole police department on the hog if Dawley wasn't let go instanter —you see?"

Chick nodded. "Go ahead," he said.

"Then in walks this guy I tell you about. He seemed to come right out of the bunch talking in the corridor, and was one of them. He was a rather husky-looking feller, smooth face, brown hair, gray eyes, a little scar along the under lid of the left eye as though he'd had a gash there some time; about your height, Mr. Carter, fresh complexion, needed a shave, and his beard was dark—much darker than his hair."

"He must have been a good-looking chap—but not exactly my style of beauty," said Chick quizzically.

"He did not look any more like you than I do, Mr. Carter!" declared Von Hegan, "although he was about your size. And the boldness of him! A dozen men might have come in here and caught him telephoning in your character!"

"I guess he had it cinched," returned Chick. "Tell me who you knew in the group of men in the corridor who stood there while this fellow was using the phone."

"Why, there was Jim Murray, a man named Murkstone, Riley from station twenty-nine, Plummel—I guess you know him?"

"No. Every one you mention so far are strangers to me. And are they all cops?"

"Murkstone isn't. He's some kind of a hanger-on around here. I don't know really what he does."

"Tell me," said Chickering, "was Dennis Haloran himself in that crowd?"

"You can bet he wasn't. I know Denny Haloran," said Von Hegan. "He never appears in anything queer—not he! If the whole policy game was sent to the demnition bow-wows I don't believe Denny would be caught. He's too sharp for that. If it was in my power to help you find out who played this trick on me, I'd do it, Mr. Carter. But I never saw that fellow before. I thought he was with the bunch in the hall, and that's really all I can say to you!"

"Didn't notice how quick he got out when he had telephoned?"

"I did not. I got him the connection, he went into that first booth, and I didn't pay any too much attenion to what he said to Caltaine. But I knew that it was something about letting the Deculto woman go. Lucky your chief got to the station in time and balked the get-away," finished Von Hegan.

"Yes, it was lucky," admitted Chick grimly, as he walked away.

He had managed to get a fairly intelligible description of the man who had palmed himself off in his, Chick's, character. But he had no idea who the fellow was, or where to pick up any further information about him. Indeed, Chick Carter felt himself balked at the outset.

And as for Nick having been to the —th Precinct station in time to keep Caltaine from giving up Maria Deculto to the men who had laid and carried out this plot, Chick was well aware it was not so. He saw that Nick had considered it wiser to hush the matter up for the time being. But the fact remained that the Italian lady's maid, the principal witness in the case against Sylvester and Dawley, had been spirited away from police control.

Who by? The answer was easy! Dennis Haloran, the policy king, was behind the game. "As sure as water runs down hill!" quoth Chick Carter.

## CHAPTER V.

### PATSY IS MORE THAN PUZZLED!

Patsy Garvan was locked into the little flat occupied by Sam Boss and his wife, at the top of the tenement house over the shop of the doll surgeon, on Fourth Street. And he had no idea why he had been brought there, or why locked in. He could not believe—at first, at least—that he had been deliberately tempted to make this call at the Boss home and then trapped there!

The little girl who had told him Mrs. Boss wanted to see him could not have been guilty of being a party to any conspiracy, for she was too small; but Patsy was mighty sure that he had not been locked into the kitchen just by chance!

There was something wrong, and Nick Carter's young assistant did not know—nor could he suspect —what it was. He had not seen Dennis Haloran, the policy king, in the crowd that had gathered on Second Avenue when "Bug" Dawley was arrested, and so he could not at all understand the meaning of this outrage.

He surely had heard a voice say "Come in!" when he had knocked at this kitchen door; but he did not hear a sound, now, throughout the little flat.

The door by which he had entered had been locked. He put his hand on the knob, softly turned it, and

tried to pull the door open. There was no hope of that; the key had really been turned in the lock.

Now, had the voice that had told him to enter come from the flat, or from outside in the dark hall? Toward the front of the house, the narrow passage, or hall, running between the two flats in this floor was pitch dark. Could somebody have been hiding in this hall, waiting for Patsy to come, and so thrown his voice as to make it sound from within the apartment?

For now Patsy realized that the voice saying "Come in!" had not been Mayme Boss' voice. The truckman's pretty wife had a very sweet voice, and Patsy awoke to the fact that the voice he had heard was surely not hers!

He wasn't exactly frightened; but he was more than puzzled; he was deeply suspicious.

If Mrs. Boss had sent for him, why should she—or anybody aiding her—wish to lock him into her flat? And alone? Was he alone? This was a pertinent query, and Patsy Garvan realized it fully.

Of course, the person who had locked the door when he entered was outside the flat; but there were three more rooms to the flat, with another door, opening out of the parlor, into the dark end of the hall.

It was an important query, too. Did the person locking Patsy in run back into the front room of the flat by the door at that end of the hall? Was this person waiting somewhere in the flat to attack the young detective? Or had that front door been locked, too, from the outside, and had his captor beaten a retreat?

And there was another mighty important question, too. What would Sam Boss say, or do, if he chanced to come home and find Patsy in his flat?

The truckman was a big fellow, and, although of an easy disposition, he would doubtless be a terrible antagonist when roused to anger! For Patsy to try to explain his being there by saying that Mrs. Boss had sent for him would not be calculated to pacify Sam's ruffled feelings.

"Say! however you look at it," grunted Patsy, standing there in indecision, "I seem to be the goat."

This indecision was not likely to last long with Patsy Garvan, however. The uncertainties, and possibilities expressed above all passed through his mind, but so swiftly that only a few minutes elapsed after the door was locked behind him until he made his second move!

His first move had been instinctive—to try the door to see if it was really locked.

No mistake about that! Patsy was armed, of course, for he had been on a business this morning which might call for the overawing of a criminal, and the muzzle of a revolver placed against the temple of a really "bad" man certainly quenches the spirit of said desperado instanter!

But Patsy did not think of the gun in his hip pocket, for he was more puzzled than frightened. As has been explained, he had no reason to expect an attack upon him—a physical attack—unless Sam Boss came home and found him in this rather inexplicable position.

The only explanation that Patsy could conjure of his present position was that it must be the result of a bit of spite on the part of a foolish and angry woman.

Patsy's questioning of Mrs. Boss, when he was investigating the assault on the doll surgeon, had revealed to Sam Boss the fact that Joe McNally, whom he had forbidden the house, was in the habit still of coming to the flat while he, Sam, was away at work.

Undoubtedly there had been a quarrel between Sam and his wife over her ne'er-do-well nephew coming to the house—and for the purpose he did. Sam was opposed to, and horribly afraid of, the policy game. He had seen so much of the harm it had done that he was almost as emphatically against the gambling evil as old Uncle Jerry Mellen himself!

Patsy wanted to be sure that he was locked in. There was another door into the hall. There were two bedrooms between the kitchen and the parlor of the little flat, and these inside rooms were practically dark even at noonday. Patsy wished heartily that he had an electric pocket light with him; but he had left the house unprepared for night work. He had wax lights, however, and before moving three steps from the door he pulled out his matchbox and lit one of the long-burning tapers. He held it above his head so that its light should not dazzle his own eyes. He realized that he was making an excellent target of himself; but he did not believe that he would be the object of any murderous attack.

He walked into the first bedroom with the sputtering wax light held high. He saw the gas bracket at hand, and he turned on the flow and lighted the gas. There was a bed, and bureau, and washstand, and a big wardrobe. Nobody was under the bed. Patsy went swiftly to the wardrobe and tried the door. It opened easily, and he stood well at one side as he swung back the door. Mrs. Boss' dresses hung there, but nothing else.

All the time Patsy had been careful to turn his back neither to the entrance into the kitchen or into the other bedroom. He was taking no unnecessary chances.

Assured that there was nobody hiding in this first bedroom, he approached the other similar apartment. The gaslight burning behind him cast considerable illumination into this second room. He could see that it was furnished pretty nearly like the other, from the doorway.

And he saw where the gas jet was, too. He lighted the gas first of all, and then quickly examined the apartment. Not a sign of any occupancy but his own. Leaving the gas burning, he stepped into the parlor. There was not an article of furniture here behind which anybody could hide.

More perplexed than ever, the young detective approached the door leading into the hall. He had hi

hand on the knob when he heard the key click in the lock of the kitchen door!

Somebody had unlocked that rear door and from the outside. Patsy turned, his hand still on the knob of the front door, and looked through the lighted bedrooms to the kitchen of the flat.

He saw the kitchen door open slowly; it opened so that whoever was coming in was hidden by the swinging door from Patsy's view. He waited to see who the newcomer could be—who was so stealthily entering the flat.

And while he was thus on the qui vive—anxiously gazing backward—he was unexpectedly caught from the other direction. The very knob on which his hand rested was wrenched around; the door appeared not to be locked at all, for it was flung back on the instant, and Patsy was hurtled across the room, stumbled over a chair, and fell full length on the floor.

He was thrown face to the floor and had no idea who his assailant from this direction was. Before he could more than scramble to his knees, a bag was flung over Patsy's head and shoulders. It was drawn so tightly around his arms that he was helpless!

In addition, he heard heavy footsteps approaching at a run through the flat. The person who had opened the kitchen door so stealthily pounced on the young detective also.

Patsy's revolver was taken from him, and he felt himself patted all over the body to make sure that he carried no other weapon concealed on his person. Then the bag was tied tightly about his waist, and his ankles were noosed and the rope drawn painfully tight, too.

The thick bag made it very difficult for the young fellow to breathe; and had he shouted his cries would have been so muffled that they could not have been heard even in the next flat!

Patsy Garvan was certainly more than puzzled now!

## CHAPTER VI.

### ON THE GRIDIRON.

Nick Carter's young assistant, Patsy, was too wise to try to cry out from the smothering folds of the bag that had been thrown over his head. He was well aware that to try and bring assistance in that way would be to run the risk of suffering far worse treatment than he was undergoing.

Whoever these fellows were who had lured him into the flat occupied by Sam Boss and his wife, and had now made a prisoner of him, they were not playing with him. This was no mere joke or hoax. The scoundrels "meant business," and it was not the time to try and break from their control.

Patsy's only safe move then was, to suggest one of his own Celtic witticisms, "to make no move at all!" He lay still—very still indeed—where he had been tumbled on the floor, and waited for his captors to give him an inkling as to their business, and their intentions regarding himself.

He could not imagine Sam Boss being the sort of a man who would countenance such a high-handed proceeding as this had been, no matter if the big truckman should get it in his head that Patsy was his enemy. Sam was the sort of a fellow who would fight in the open, if he wanted to fight at all; and Patsy could not imagine what should have given the truckman the idea that he was his enemy, anyway!

As for Mayme Boss, Patsy was equally at a loss to understand why the young matron should have taken such means as this to punish him for getting her into trouble with her husband over Joe McNally.

And then the thought of Joe McNally put the first glimmering of an idea—a possible explanation of this mystery—into Patsy's active brain. He remembered how ugly the ne'er-do-well had looked as they stood outside Dawley's billiard cellar after the police raid on the place; and how McNally had taken his and Nick's warning very ill indeed.

Could Joe McNally have engineered this thing? He might have got his aunt, Mrs. Boss, to go out and leave him the keys of her flat, the message had been sent to Patsy by a child too young to know what it meant to tell an untruth, and now McNally and his friends had Patsy in their power.

And what for? What did they intend to do with him?

These quesitons were likely to be answered very promptly; but not by anything Patsy heard the men say. They spoke only in whispers, and he did not have any idea whether Joe McNally was one of them, or not.

As soon as the lively little Irishman's feet were tied and he was really helpless, he was lifted and carried immediately out of the flat. Patsy knew this to be so, for he was carried through quite a long narrow passage which Nick's young assistant knew to be the dark hall between the two flats on this top floor.

Certainly they would not dare carry a muffled and bound prisoner down the stairways, and through the halls, and onto the public street—and in broad daylight! The people in this house were respectable, if poor; they would not stand for any such crooked work!

And Patsy soon learned that the plans of his captors did not include a descent into the house, but an ascent out of it!

They carried him up the steep flight of steps to the roof. The roof was evidently empty, and so were the roofs of several houses in the row, as Patsy made out; for his captors carried him from one to the other, and how many they really crossed before they descended through another hatchway into another house the young man had no means of telling.

Nor could he tell for sure whether there were two or three men concerned in his captivity. The houses had been all of a height—four stories; but when his enemies descended with him through this second

house. Patsy was sure that they went down five flights of stairs.

This would be, then, the cellar of the house into which he was brought. And what kind of a house was it, and what were the people in it, if a prisoner could be brought in so boldly?

Patsy, as soon as he was flung down—and on a cement floor—realized that his guess was correct; this was a cellar. And the odors that came to his nostrils, even through the heavy sacking, assured him of another thing. There were beer and spirits in the cellar. It was pretty safe to put down a bet on this being the cellar of a saloon, and the house above was undoubtedly used as a cheap and, perhaps, not very respectable lodging house—a Raines law hotel, in fact.

Patsy was thoroughly acquainted with the neighborhood. Of course, he was still between Second and First Avenues, and on the south side of Fourth Street. But for the life of him he could not have told which way the men had carried him when they got him to the roof—whether east or west! There was a hotel in either direction—more than one, in fact—that would answer to the description of this one down into the cellar of which he had been borne.

He was at once figuring how he could get out of the sack and escape from his predicament before worse happened to him; but he was not given long for such thoughts, and no time at all to put them into execution!

Patsy was a good deal like the man at the three-ringed circus. There was so much happening that he couldn't keep more than a third of it in his mind at a time.

Scarcely had he been dumped on the cellar floor after being hoisted over several roofs and down the flights of stairs, than he heard a row among his captors—or between his captors and some other people. However, in the melée Patsy received several hearty kicks and was walked on twice by somebody with boots on that registered well into the 'teens!

Then a bull-like voice penetrated to his muffled ears, shouting:

"You can't pull off no such game here, I tell you! Beat it, you hoboes, beat it!"

"You're fishin' for trouble, Dockery!" cried another angry voice.

Then Patsy heard a lot of jabbering that was too low for him to make out, followed by the heavy voice saying decisively:

"All right. I'll give you just thirty minutes. Then out you go, and him with you, or I'll call in the bulls. That's final—understand?"

There was a heavy tread up the stair. Patsy groaned and wondered if it was the same pair of boots that had walked up and down his supine body during the ruction. Whoever was in charge of the house had evidently come down on the fellows who had captured the detective, and had ordered them out.

Now, it certainly would puzzle them a whole lot—so Patsy thought—to get him out of the saloon cellar without being observed, and in broad daylight! He hoped that it was a turn in his favor.

But he did not know his men. Rather, he did not realize yet what the spur was that had led them to make a captive and lug him as far as they had!

He heard them talking together, in low tones, and then realized that something was brought, or rolled, from the other end of the cellar. There seemed to be three of the men, for one said something about "getting Sam," and then Patsy heard his boots on the stairs, while the other two were moving the object brought from the farther end of the cellar nearer.

The name "Sam" troubled Patsy again. Was Sam Boss really in this job?

Suddenly Patsy was raised again, this time by only one man, and his head and shoulders were dragged into something—a box or a hogshead. There was straw in it—for which Patsy was later mighty thankful. His legs were crowded in after the rest of his body, and he knew then, by the rounding of the sides of the thing, that it was barrel-shaped.

Then it was hoisted up on end and Patsy found himself perched on his head and shoulders in the bottom of the barrel with his feet sticking up. Immediately he understood that this was a beer barrel—one of those casks in which bottled beer is packed at the brewery—and his captors intended to head it up!

What could Patsy do? Struggling would not help matters. He was almost stifled, as it was; and it would be worse once the head of the cask was on.

As the men fitted the head and nailed it into place, Patsy was gradually rattled down into a more comfortable position; but hardly did he find relief when the headed-up cask was thrown over and rolled to the other end of the cellar. That was when the straw came in handy!

Could he have shouted now, Patsy would have recklessly done so. But his voice would not have been heard outside the barrel had he been able to get breath to yell.

He heard no voices now. He only knew that, in a short time, several men laid hold of the cask and began to roll it up an inclined plane—evidently up the skids to the street level, and through the cellar hatch.

Soon he felt that the cask was on the street. It was set up on end—fortunately the right end, and he sat crouched in it, his knees as high as his chin, drawing his breath gaspingly.

Then it was thrown down and rolled up more skids—this time to a truck, he hazily determined. It was not turned on end again, but was wedged tightly on the truck floor, and the vehicle soon began to shake and jar over the cobblestones.

Patsy had gone through a good deal by this time, and, as he afterward admitted, this seemed to be "the last straw." He thought he should die for air. His body was covered with perspiration. His lungs were stifled and his labored respirations sucked the bagging into his mouth and so made his breathing the more difficult.

The drive through the streets on the truck seemed endless. It appeared that for entire days and nights he must have been shaken about in this cask, and the cask had been rolled about, up and down inclines, and finally it seemed to Patsy as though it must have fallen off the truck itself and was rolling over the cobblestones!

Suddenly he roused out of this dazed state sufficiently to realize that the cask was off the truck! It was rolled down the skids onto another sidewalk, across the walk, and then sent hurtling down a short flight of cellar steps.

The bruising Patsy got during this performance of the cask was sufficient to either knock him completely senseless, or rouse him to a lively sense of his sufferings!

It had the latter effect. Patsy knew quite well what was going on both inside and outside the cask during the next ten minutes.

He faintly heard the cellar trap banged shut and the rattle of chains—evidently the chains that secured this door. Again there were men's voices whispering about the cask, but he could not tell how many men were present.

The cask was turned up on end again, and once more he was fortunate, for his own head was uppermost. Somebody began beating on the staves with a hammer, and then several blows loosened the head. A hoop was knocked off, and then the head splintered and came away in sections.

Patsy made himself as small as possible so as not to be struck by the hammer, or the splintering fragments of the cask head. It broke through and was torn aside by eager hands at last, the cask was overthrown once more, and the young detective was unceremoniously dumped out upon the cellar floor.

He rolled out with the straw and was not so very badly hurt; nevertheless he was weak, scarcely able to breathe, and his head whirled as though he had been dervish dancing.

"Get him out of that sack," commanded a voice that was quite strange to Patsy.

"Douce the glim first," said another, and then Patsy realized that the cellar was made dark, while the bagging was slashed so as to relieve him, but without disturbing the rope that bound it and his arms. The pressure of this was numbing; he could scarcely feel that he had hands at all.

When the sack was torn away, however, Patsy's lungs pumped in several good bellows-full of air. But almost at once a wrapper of some kind—it seemed like a many-folded silk handkerchief—was brought across his mouth and tied tightly at the back of his neck. He could not cry out, but he could breathe with some comfort through his nostrils.

All this in the dark. He could make out some figures moving about him in the gloom, but that was all. Suddenly the sharp voice commanded:

"Up with him, now! Cut those ankle ropes. Make the lubber walk."

Patsy was only too anxious to walk; but when he was lifted to his feet and tried to take a step, he found that the tight ropes had stopped the circulation of the blood in his feet and ankles, and they seemed to crumble under him, and he fell to the floor.

"Get up, blast you!" commanded the leader of the gang, and Patsy received a kick in the small of the back that didn't do him a bit of good.

It goaded the little Irishman to futile rage, however. He was again helped to his feet, and this time, when he found himself able to stand, he kicked out with all his might, and landed on somebody's shin! The blow brought a cry of dismay from the recipient, and Patsy learned that he had not landed on the man who had kicked him.

"Hold on! I never done nothin' to him!" whined the man kicked. "He's like a bulldog, Massy. You step on his tail and he bites whoever is nearest his jaws! Oh, oh! My shin!"

"Shut up! Serves you right!" returned the sharp-voiced man, evidently "Massy." "Stop your squealing and boost the fellow upstairs."

Patsy was hustled toward some steps, and a door was opened at the top, revealing a faintly lighted hall. He was hoisted up these steps, and with no kindly hand. There were four men in the gang, but he could see none of them clearly.

Indeed, he soon learned that the man who commanded them—and who had evidently met them at this house—was masked, and in a peculiar way. His head, and his body to his waist, was covered by a black sateen bag, in which were eyeholes, an opening for his mouth, and holes for his arms.

The other three men were careful to keep behind Patsy, and he did not obtain a fair look at any of them as he was hurried through this hall and up another, and carpeted, flight of stairs.

He drew the idea from certain furnishings that he saw, however, that the house was occupied by well-to-do people; and, of course, it was a private residence. And Patsy was pretty sure that one of his captors—the man whom he had kicked, in fact—was Joe McNally, the policy fiend.

It was not a far cry, therefore, to the guess that Patsy's capture and present treatment was because of Dawley's arrest, and was instigated by the so-called "Policy King," Dennis Haloran. Nick Carter's young assistant began to think clearly and to the point. Why would Haloran wish to capture him? And where had he been brought?

The two questions brought in their train their own answers. Haloran may have thought that the arrest of Dawley was a direct attack by Nick Carter on the policy game. He would desire to know what the plans of the famous detective were. How better might he learn these plans than by capturing one of Nick's confidential men and putting him on the gridiron?

And Patsy believed that he had been led into the trap by the machinations of Joe McNally—perhaps with the connivance and assistance of Mrs. Mayne

Boss—and he had now been brought to Dennis Haloran's own residence on East Twelfth Street, for the Policy King to question him.

It was a bold thing to do, but Patsy knew that Haloran felt that his power in New York was invulnerable. He had been carrying matters with a high hand for months. A society of reformers that had been organized particularly to fight Haloran and break his political and criminal power had failed in its attempts, and so, since the late election, he had felt that he was stronger than ever, and his wicked business more firmly established than before.

Patsy had never seen Dennis Haloran, although he was a familiar enough figure on the East Side. At least, he had been familiar before he had grown so wealthy. At one time he was merely a cheap politician—a whipper-in for bigger men in the political game.

He grew. Not by making friends, however, as so many of these ward politcians grow. He was not "a good fellow." He was, indeed, a very bad fellow. He became known as "a bad man to cross." He ruled his followers by fear and by the fact that he had "plums" to give away, and that the aforesaid plums went by his favor.

He had gathered about him a set of "strong-arm men" and low people generally, who, either because they hoped for some future favor, or knew that "Denny had the dead wood on them," were willing and ready to do the Policy King's bidding to almost any end!

Of late years he did not appear much in his old haunts. He had uptown friends and affiliations. In a certain shoddy society of the newly rich of the metropolis, his wife and daughters had taken a prominent place. To people who never asked how a man got it, but only how much he had got, Dennis Haloran was as welcome as the flowers in May!

The Haloran home was on the Drive. But the East Side believed that Denny Haloran still lived in the old house on East Twelfth Street—and he did, but for business purposes only!

Patsy believed this was the house in which Haloran attended daily to the policy business; he did not believe the fellow in the mask, however, was Haloran himself. He had been told that the Policy King was a very tall and thin man, and one who, with all his money, had not been able to secure good health.

The fellow who now led Patsy by the arm, as he stumbled up to the second floor of the house, was a husky enough chap, with plenty of muscular power. When they reached the upper hall—still only dimly lighted—this masked man dismissed the others with a muttered word, and knocked on a door near the head of the flight of stairs.

"Enter!" commanded a voice from within.

The fellow opened the door and shoved Patsy, with no gentle hand, into the apartment. The young fellow was not particularly strong on his pins yet, and he tripped and fell full length again—fortunately on a rug. The sudden glare of light blinded him, too.

His hands were tied behind him, and it was difficult for him to scramble to his feet without assistance. The masked man who accompanied him into the room assisted him with another well-delivered kick, and likewise seized him by the shoulder and jerked him upright.

"Stand up, blank you!" he commanded.

Patsy laid up these blows and curses in his mind. His time might come, he believed. But when his eyes were used to the light in the room, he found that they were not alone here. At a fine roll-top desk was another masked man. This individual was swathed in a long black garment that covered not only his head and shoulders, but swept the carpet as he sat in the armchair by the desk.

Whether he was a large man or a small one it was difficult to tell. His eyes gleamed sharply through the two slits in the upper part of the mask he wore. He smoked a black cigar and held the flowing robe close in below his chin with one hand so that it should not catch fire from the cigar. The hand thus revealed was thin and clawlike and ornamented by two fine diamond rings.

"So you've got him, have you?" said the man at the desk sharply. "Is that Patsy Garvan?"

"Let him speak for himself," said the other man. "Here, you! speak up!" and he tore the bandage off Patsy's face. "But if you raise your voice I'll bat your head off your shoulders!" and the fellow advanced a fist like a ham under Patsy's nose.

Patsy did not say a word. He was mad clear through, and he felt that by remaining dumb he would exasperate these men so that they might drop some information that would be, later, useful to Nick. An exasperated man will usually say more than he intends.

"Can't he speak?" demanded the man at the desk. The other drew off and deliberately knocked the little Irishman down by a blow on the side of his neck! It was a most cowardly thing to do, for Patsy was absolutely unable to defend himself, or save himself from falling, as his hands were tied so tightly.

But even this blow did not make Patsy speak. He could not rise until his enemy dragged him to his knees again. The little Irishman shut his lips tightly and did not even answer the man's cruelty by a threat.

"He's a plucky young devil," declared the man at the desk. "Don't bat him again, Massy—not yet, at least. I want to get something out of him."

"I'll have his heart's blood out of him if he doesn't speak!" growled the other scoundrel.

"I don't know," returned the man at the desk, who was plainly the commander. "I'd like to have men about me that would stand that sort of treatment before they'd open up their very souls about my affairs. But this fellow has got to divulge Nick Carter's plans, or he'll suffer something worse than death," declared the commander, and his harsh voice

shook suddenly with passion. "In the first place, he is in my hands. I can do as I please with him. He may never be seen in the light of day again, if I so choose. Does he understand this?"

Patsy's face betrayed no added emotion. If he was troubled by the statement he managed to hide his fear completely. His bruised countenance was an emotionless mask.

"No! don't strike him again, Massy!" warned the man at the desk, as the other fellow made a gesture toward Patsy. "Call the woman. She must learn the personal appearance of each of these men who work with Carter. I'll get them all before the game is over, and she must be on her guard with all of them."

Massy went to another door than that by which he and the prisoner had entered. He opened it and spoke to somebody in the next room. There was a rustling of women's garments, and then there stepped into the room a woman whom Patsy recognized with a start that could not be suppressed.

It was Maria Deculto, Mrs. Johnstone Ridler's maid, who had conspired with her brother Sylvester to get possession of her mistress' diamond necklace, and whom Patsy knew Nick Carter considered his principal witness in the case the detective had worked up against Dawley and Sylvester Deculto.

Patsy knew that Chick Carter was to have arrested Maria before she returned to the Ridler house. Had Chick fallen down on this business? Patsy did not know what the reader already knows about Maria's arrest and subsequent rescue from the police station, and her appearance here amazed the young detective.

It really looked as though all Nick's plans were going wrong; Patsy felt that he was in a bad box himself, and hope was at low ebb with him as he faced the ugly and angry countenance of the Italian woman.

## CHAPTER VII.

### DANNY TURNS THE TABLES.

"It's a Panhard we're after," said Nick Carter to his youthful chauffeur, as he and Danny descended the steps of the —th Precinct Station.

"And a guy that looks like me—or who makes himself look like me," growled the chauffeur significantly.

"Wait. We'll try and find something about the car first," said Nick, with a smile. "Revenge, my boy, is a luxury, not a necessity, and necessities should always come first."

Danny felt too sour to reply to this pleasantry; but he started his engine with alacrity, and they were soon spinning westward, and uptown, toward the agency and salesroom of the Panhard machine.

Nick was well known there, and he was able, on explaining his need to a certain gentleman of some influence in the concern, to get a complete list of the owners of Panhards operating under a New York license.

There was a very long list of these, of course; but it was easy, too, to eliminate many from the running. Lieutenant Caltaine had been exact in his statement regarding the car that had been used by the men who had come to his station for Maria Deculto. In all appearances it was exactly like Nick's own vehicle —its style, size, power, and coloring was the same. A Panhard does not go out of the hands of the agent without all these particulars being recorded, and the salespeople don't close a contract without knowing who is—ostensibly, at least—buying the car.

Nick, of course, had his suspicions—and well founded they were—regarding the identity of the person who had instigated the release of Maria Deculto from the toils of the police. But he did not expect that person—the Policy King—to appear actually in the game. Haloran might own several automobiles, and one of these might have been used because it was like Nick's own car. Yet if this were so, it would betray an overboldness on Haloran's part, and certain lack of cunning.

So Nick did not expect to find the Policy King's name on the list of Panhard owners. And, therefore, he was not disappointed. His first scrutiny of the list did not show Haloran's name.

But Nick Carter possessed a wonderful memory for names as well as faces. People who walked the crooked path—in any particular—if they had come into the detective's ken, were apt to be remembered. Nick did not depend entirely upon his memory for these particulars of "past careers," but it was surprising, as he followed the point of his finger down the list of Panhard owners, how many of these people he knew something about.

There was Chesborough Brooks, the society man and cotillon leader; Papilon, the aristocratic lady's tailor; Mandeville, owner of a racing stable; Lon Brinkler, the theatrical man; P. G. Hilquint, who made a fortune in patent medicines; Harrison Frisbie, corporation lawyer; Burlington, a broker with a reputation as unsavory as the certain line of curb stocks that he dealt in.

Nick canvassed Burlington some moments in his mind before going on down the list. The broker was as "crooked as a ram's horn," but Nick did not believe that he would be connected with the Policy King in any way. His tastes did not run to such men as Denny Haloran.

Proudfoot, the flour millionaire, was next on the list; Kennelbrodt, the brewer; Amasy Spriggs, contractor; Phillipots, the art connoisseur and auctioneer; James G. B. Layton, architect; Lyndon Massy, clubman, horse owner, athlete, something of a theatrical angel, and supposed to be the social adviser of a certain prominent East Side politician who had been for several years trying to jimmy his way into good society; Burton Noyse, editor; Doctor Pendleton Mayne, the alienist and investigator —

Just at this point Nick Carter chuckled softly to himself. Two men on the list in close juxtaposition

had brought to his mind an opinion that one had given of the other. It was at the Soltaire Club; both men were members, but two more different personalities could scarcely be imagined, and Nick knew both men fairly well.

Doctor Mayne had said of Lyn Massy, as the athlete shouldered himself out of the crowded room:

"That man is a gorilla. He walks like one, he has the chest and arm development of the giant ape; and, by Jove! he has the manners of one! I am not altogether sure that Darwin struck it right when he suggested our ascent from the apes; but I'm very sure that a certain class of what we call at present 'civilized man' is rapidly deteriorating into apehood. He is descending rapidly the scale to absolute brutehood. That Massy is an example. He would rather see a prize fight than listen to Paderewski. I doubt if he can write three lines of good English; he certainly cannot speak decent English. And yet—we tolerate him and his kind. But they are more dangerous in modern society than anarchists. Lack of necessity—ay, even lack of opportunity, perhaps—is all that keeps such fellows as Massy from joining the lower ranks of the criminal world."

Nick Carter's remembrance of this was recalled at this time with amusement; but his chuckle was brief. The detective's mind was suddenly smitten with the thought that, since that time, Massy had figured rather frequently in questionable incidents in the public prints.

He had knocked down a cab driver whom he claimed had overcharged him; the man later had made the clubman pay damages. He had been sued by a "show girl" out of some Broadway production for breach of promise, and it was whispered that the girl's eyes had been blackened by the ruffian in an argument they had had in a certain all-night restaurant near Lobster Square.

Massy had been accused, too, of hiring a certain notorious gang leader and a number of his thugs to beat up a coachman whom Massy had had a fistic argument with, out of which argument he had come second best. Nick had considered at the time that Doctor Pendleton Mayne was a very clear-sighted individual to have foreseen so well the probable course in life that Massy would follow.

Massy's friends and usual associates were wealthy "sports" and politicians of the worser sort. He might easily be a friend of the Policy King's. Nick's eye ran down the possible list of Panhard owners, saw no other "suspect," and came back to Lyndon Massy.

Massy's Panhard was just like Nick's own, in almost every way. It was even painted the same. Nick secured the New York and Jersey license numbers under which Massy ran his car, and some other particulars, and then joined the waiting Danny outside.

"I think I have a line on the owner of the car we're after," he said to the young chauffeur, "and I know where the car is put up. Drive to One Hundred and Eighth Street, West. The garage is there. If I am right, I shall engage a stall for this car and give an assumed name, and you will have to stay there until our man comes in."

"You mean my man," said Danny, grinning. "It's me that wants to meet up with that scalawag that had the gall to make off he was me."

"Go easy. If the fellow who played your part is this Massy's regular chauffeur it will simplify matters. Get acquainted with him. Find out, if you can, where he was to-day. Do the best you can with him, Danny. I shan't be far away from you meanwhile."

They ran up to the Harlem garage, and Nick found, on inquiring in the office, that Massy did keep his machine there, and that it was not now in the house nor was Massy's chauffeur about the premises.

Nick had given Danny a chance on the way uptown to do a little making up himself. With a nicely adjusted mustache, beautifully pointed, some color in his cheeks, and a wig of close-cropped black curls, Danny looked anything but the Irishman he was. He appeared, indeed, to be French, and as he had learned some French words from Patsy and could imitate the broken English and gestures of the barber near Nick's house around on Lexington Avenue, he stood to pass very easily as an imported chauffeur.

Nick himself had certain inquiries to set afoot regarding the whereabouts of Lyndon Massy earlier in the day. He realized that the description of one of the bogus Central Office detectives given him by Lieutenant Caltaine, could easily be the reckless clubman who owned this other Panhard.

Chick, he knew, was busy downtown; but he went to the telephone near the garage and telephoned to the house to see if Patsy had come in. Neither Joseph nor Adelina, Patsy's wife, had seen the young man, and Nick began to wonder what had become of him.

He knew that Patsy had no particular work to keep him downtown, for the young man had only been going to call on Uncle Jerry Mellen, the doll surgeon, who had not yet recovered from the blow on the head delivered by the Italian youth, Sylvester Deculto.

But Danny had the centre of the stage just now. He remained at the garage all the afternoon. Just before supper time Massy's Panhard came in, and Danny certainly was interested in the fellow who ran it.

And Danny knew the fellow instantly. Morris Pinkus had lived in the neighborhood where Nick's chauffeur was brought up, and more than once Danny had fought with the fellow. He was a tough little rascal, about Danny's build and equaling him in agility, and had not borne an enviable reputation, even when he was a small boy.

Danny was so well disguised that Pinkus was quite unsuspicious of him. He knew that Danny and his car were new to the garage, but he asked no questions. When Danny gave him a hand in cleaning up his own machine, Pinkus called him "Frenchy," and invited him to go out to a near-by café for supper. Danny

accepted, declaring that "Monseur vould not ze car again use that night."

"You're lucky," said Pinkus. "My boss is likely to call for the machine any old time, night or day."

"He is a ve-ry busy man, then?" ventured Danny.

"Yes, he is! Busy pulling chestnuts out of the fire for other people," grunted Pinkus.

Danny started. "Pulling ze chestnut—eh? Ze chestnut is a joke—eh?"

"Gee! So are you a joke, Frenchy!" chuckled Pinkus. "But it's no joke that the boss has been up against to-day. We're all likely to get pulled for it."

"Pulled out of ze fire?" again ventured Danny, staring as though his brain were quite addled by the other's metaphor.

"Hello! Ain't got over that yet, heh?" queried Pinkus. "I'll tell you, Frenchy. That pulling chestnuts out of the fire means that the boss has been doing dirty work for some other guy—see?"

"Non, non!" murmured Danny, shaking his head. "Vat is zat 'dirty work'? Surely, your monseur does not soil his hands—he is not of ze laboring class, and yet own ze motor car, eh?"

"Aw, rats!" returned Pinkus, in amused disgust. "How do you find your way around without a guardeen, Frenchy? This guy I woik for has got money to burn—and I've been pretty near choked by the smoke of it when it was burnin' sometimes—and that's no con!"

"You mean that he is a liberal monseur?" suggested Danny.

"Huh! he's liberal enough. He has to come across' good and plenty for all the extry work I have to do for him. And I could put him in a bad box easy if I wanted to, just for what happened to-day. But don't you get nosy, Frenchy," advised Pinkus. "Only count yourself lucky that you don't have to work night and day, like me. I had to clean up me car when I come in because I knew—as well as I know anything—that I'll have to hike out again to-night."

Pinkus had a drink or two with his supper, and a couple more afterward, and they did not act as a stopper on his conversational powers by any means! He was somewhat maudlin with "Frenchy" by the time they went back to the garage, and once he wept on the latter's shoulder and told him that he was a "lucky dog, by Jove! a lucky little French poodle!" to have a boss that did not overwork him.

Pinkus would have gone to sleep in his car, while he waited for the summons he was positive would come for him sometime during the evening; but this did not suit Danny. He kept him awake and talking, and "talking is dry work," as Pinkus declared. They made several trips to the café, at which "Frenchy" sipped sugar and water like a true Frenchman, and Pinkus took several more drinks of something that was stronger.

Danny found opportunity of communicating with Nick, and informed his chief of the state of affairs. They laid their plans accordingly. Nick and Danny were obliged to work this end of the game alone, for Patsy's whereabouts had not yet been discovered, although Adelina—also a good hand at detective work—had gone downtown to make inquiries about her husband.

The evening wore on, and at length a call came for Pinkus over the telephone. His employer wanted him at the Hotel Cadillac.

Now, Pinkus was in no state to run a motor car through the streets of New York; he recognized this fact vaguely himself.

"Ah, gee! If I go out with this pot on me, I'll run into the Tenderloin Station and knock it off its foundations—sure!" he grumbled. "Come along with me, Frenchy, will you, like a good fellow? It's your fault I'm jagged, anyway. Watching you frog-eaters drinking sugar and water would drive any man to liquor up."

"*Oui, oui! mon ami,*" said Danny, getting off about all the French he knew at one pop. "I will go wiz you. The night air, he will do your head good, eh?"

"My old head 'wizzes,' all right, all right," grumbled Pinkus.

Together they got the Panhard out, Danny cranked up, and he even took the place of Massy's chauffeur under the wheel. He saw a big limousine car standing at the corner, and as they swung past it he recognized Nick himself in the driver's seat. The car was otherwise empty.

The limousine started directly on the trail of the Panhard. Danny ran down Eighth Avenue to the first entrance into Central Park. Pinkus was really too befuddled to know just where the car was going, and it was easy for Nick's young assistant to turn off into a less-traveled way.

There he stopped the machine. Pinkus roused up to inquire what was the matter with the dashed old contraption, and just then Nick ran his car alongside and leaped out.

In two minutes Pinkus was gagged, tied, and flung into the bottom of the limousine body of Nick's car, where he was hidden by the drawn curtains. Danny removed his disguise and put on the cap and jacket of Massy's chauffeur, in that way making himself look much like that individual.

"This change-about thing suits me fine!" declared the Irish boy. "That fellow played my part. Now I'll play his for a while. How do I look, Mr. Carter?"

Nick examined him in the light of the automobile lamp and pronounced him a "dead ringer" for the overcome chauffeur.

"But remember that you are playing a dangerous game, Danny," warned the detective. "Have a gun handy. Don't let that Massy ever get you foul, for he is a hard hitter and a bad man when he is roused, I understand. Think you can play the part of Pinkus so as not to be caught immediately?"

"I been watching him, and talking with him, drunk and sober, for four hours," said Danny, with pride.

"I reckon I can give a pretty fair imitation of him. If I ain't pushed too close, I venture to say this Massy won't get onto my curves immediately."

"And, as I said before," Nick Carter declared, "I shall be close at hand, Danny. All right, my boy; go ahead!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### CHICK FOLLOWS A VAGUE CLUE.

Nicholas Carter could not have been a thief catcher so many years without having some friends, as well as many enemies, among the very class of people against whom he was continually at war. There are certain natures, even among these perverts of mankind, who can appreciate a "square fighter."

The Carters were known always to keep their word; if they made a man a promise, that man could bank on it. So Chickering, as well as his chief, knew where to go to get certain information about doings in the underworld, when that information was not of sufficient vital importance to be considered evidence against a pal.

After his interview with Von Hegan, the man at the telephone switchboard in police headquarters, Chick left the house without speaking to another soul. There were good friends of his there of whom he might have made inquiries regarding the unknown who had represented himself as "Chick Carter" and had boldly brought about the release of Maria Deculto, the important witness in the Dawley case.

But Chick doubted if the men he knew at headquarters would have any inkling of the identity of the man he was after. Dennis Haloran's friends might be many about 300 Mulberry Street, too—in fact, it was probable that a bunch of them had been concerned in the fooling of Von Hegan and Lieutenant Caltaine.

The crowd gathered in the corridor had masked the trick of the Unknown in his representation of Chick Carter. Then he had been allowed to make a quick get-away, and to try to interview any of the men whom Von Hegan had noticed in the corridor would, Chick believed, be decidedly unwise.

There was a good rule of conduct—and Chickering had learned it of his master—which fitted right into this situation. Dennis Haloran had certainly taken the first trick in this game of wits. The hand dealt the Carters "didn't look much," as Chick expressed it after scanning the cards; but it was a good play to keep the other side guessing!

If he began to make inquiries about police headquarters, somebody on the watch for Denny Haloran would quickly spot him, and find out what he was about. In fact, that spy was probably already aware that Chick had talked with Von Hegan; for the detective to try and pick up further information in the vicinity would merely serve to show the enemy how anxious the Carters were over the escape of Maria Deculto.

Chick Carter steered for a certain corner of the Bowery, some little distance uptown. On that corner was a saloon patronized by people of the underworld.

There was a back room, or "café," attached, in which, on almost every afternoon, a number of women and men could be found, grouped about the age-blackened and beer-stained tables, their heads close together, and where discussion of certain affairs that personally interested them was carried on in a jargon that would puzzle the uninitiated to understand. This jargon is not the common slang of the streets, although it is partly made up of that outlaw language, too.

And when a stranger enters the place there is a sudden hush of all conversation, and a furtive scrutiny of the intruder until he has revealed his identity as a friend, or has gone out.

Chick, although he was not well known in the vicinity and did not look like a policeman in plain clothes, had scarcely stepped through the swinging doors of the side entrance of this particular place, when a private signal was passed from the man behind the bar, through the busy waiter carrying a tray of glasses into the back room, warning the patrons assembled there that "a stranger was within the gates."

Chick noted the sudden hush that fell upon the rear apartment, although he did not even look into the room. He walked straight to the bar and said to the bulbous-faced individual behind it:

"John, I want to see Emil Loeser. He's here, and has been here since he came out last Monday. He hasn't done anything yet, and there is no old count against him that I know anything about. But I want to ask him a question that won't hurt either him or you in the answering. Trot him out."

"You're Mr. Carter, I take it?" growled the man slowly. "The young Mr. Carter."

"You remember me, all right, John. But don't take time to figger over it. Either send for Emil, or I'll go in there myself and haul him out—and that might cause comment on the part of some of your friends," added Chick significantly.

Scowlingly the red-faced man obeyed. As the waiter came back from his trip inside he called to him:

"Tell Emil to come out here!"

The waiter looked back over his shoulder, evidently caught the eye of the man in question, and beckoned him.

"Boss wants yer," the white-aproned functionary said, as somebody shuffled to the door and asked a smothered question.

Chick had turned his back and approached a table in a corner of the barroom. He did not show his face at first when the man he wished to speak to came into the room.

This was rather a vacuous-looking young man, with

a tallowy face, on which grew sparsely a few light hairs—not a beard at all. His hair was thin, too; he possessed light eyebrows and washed-out-looking eyes. These unpleasant features, together with a weak mouth, a weaker chin, and a furtive, sidelong look, stamped him indisputably what he was—a degenerate.

This man was a criminal, but a weak character. There probably had been nothing vicious about Emil Loeser in the beginning. Now he was a confirmed "crook," a tool for stronger men in crime, a stool pigeon, almost always the one to be caught if any "trick" fell through. Emil had acquired the drug habit.

"You vant me, Shon?" he asked of the bartender.

"There's a gent wants yer," growled the latter, nodding at Chick.

"Vants me?" exclaimed Loeser, with a sudden shake in his voice. "D' I know him, Shon?"

"He knows you, all right, all right!" returned the other sourly. "Go over and speak to him."

"Oh, I'm to speak mit him, heh?" muttered the crook doubtfully. But he was used to obeying orders without much question. He had learned that in Sing Sing prison. He shuffled over to Chick Carter's side.

"Sit down and call for what you want to drink, Emil," said Chick, showing the man his face suddenly, and seizing his forearm quickly, thus thrusting him into a handy chair.

Had he not so taken him by surprise, Emil would have started to run. A cry of fear was already on his lips, but Chick's firm grasp upon him and his threatening gaze into the weak eyes of the fellow stilled him.

"Don't get scared, Emil," advised the detective. "This is nothing on you. I know all about you since you've been down here. There isn't a thing against you—yet. But I want some information."

*"Mein Gott!* Misder Shick!" groaned Emil. "You vill make me shplit on some of dose fellers some day, undt dey vill kill me yet."

"Nonsense! I'm not going to ask you any pertinent question. Nothing you can tell me will incriminate anybody. But you know that I want the truth, and that I usually get it!"

*"Ach!* I know," groaned Emil.

Chick, sitting across the little table from him, held his attention now by his eye rather than by physical contact.

"There is quite a crowd in the room yonder?" and the detective nodded toward the back room.

"Yes, Misder Shick," admitted the man.

"I know that you hang around here about all day, waiting to drink at other men's expense. You hear what the habitués of the place talk about. Now, there were a couple of arrests made over on Second Avenue this morning. The story's in this afternoon's papers. What is being said about it in there?"

Emil looked cautiously around. "You mean about Dawley?" he whispered, behind his hand.

"Yes," said Chick. "That's the particular one."

"It's Denny Haloran's biz. We don't care noddings about him," grunted Emil.

"No? But Haloran's money is as good as the next man's. And since the arrest he has turned a little trick, and I bet he used some of your friends to do it, eh? He's got hold of a witness——"

*"Mein Gott!"* ejaculated the easily frightened German. "How you findt dot oud yet? You are de teufel, Shick! You know dot idt vas Denny dot got dot feller?"

Chick was perplexed. He was speaking of Maria Deculto; but the thief called the absent witness a "feller."

"I usually know what I am talking about," said Chick slowly, and giving the other time to explain himself.

"I know idt," groaned Emil. "Vell, I know about idt—yes. I don't know who done idt; but one feller come in nodt an hour ago and said dot the feller had been taken into Schultz's cellar, to keep dere till night; bud Schultz vouldn't stand for it, even if Denny Haloran was behind it. They had to dake him out in broad daylight—undt they took him out in a barrel."

"Where did they take him?" asked the puzzled Chick.

"I dond't know."

"Are you sure this fellow was grabbed by Denny's orders?"

"Shuah!"

"And it had to do with Dawley's arrest?"

"Shuah!" declared the German again. "Dere iss pig tr-rouble comin' to de policy peoples—so idt iss said. You know, Misder Shick."

"Humph! Yes, I know a fat lot," murmured the puzzled Chick. "But this thing must be looked into. Who the dickens besides Maria Deculto has Denny Haloran taken into camp?"

But he did not show Emil that he was puzzled. He asked him:

"What Schultz is this you speak of?"

"He keeps a saloon over there," and the man explained fully how to find the Schultz hotel and bar.

"All right. Now, you see, I didn't want much of you," said Chick, rising. "Keep this to yourself."

"Shuah, Misder Shick!" cried Emil. "You t'ink I be fool enough to tell, heh?"

Chick went straight to the place in question. He knew nothing about Patsy having remained in the neighborhood of East Fourth Street after the arrests of the morning were made. He had no well-defined suspicion as to the identity of the prisoner that had been taken by the order of the Policy King. That Patsy Garvan was in the web of the spider did not enter Chick's mind.

But the detective was anxious to "get something on Haloran." It seemed the only thing to do in order to square matters about Maria Deculto. Therefore Chick was prepared to follow this very vague clue which Emil Loeser's hint had given him.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ACCOMMODATING "ITALIAN."

By the grace of the police commissioner personally, Nick Carter and his assistants were allowed to wear the official badge of the detective bureau, although when circumstances would permit, Nick always insisted upon the police themselves making arrests in the cases which came under his control.

Here was an occasion, however, when Chick found the badge he wore very useful. Schultz was a big, beefy Dutchman, who had a reputation as a fighter—and sustained it well—and was "not afraid of der teufel!" Nor of the police. Whether he ran a very respectable hotel or not, he had a certain code of morals of his own, and everybody that came into the house had to abide by his code.

Chick sized the man up wisely, and did not try to "sneak" any information on him. He took him aside, showed Schultz his badge, and got right at the thing he wanted to discuss, without any beating about the bush.

"I'm inquiring about that game that was pulled off here to-day, Schultz. They tell me the guy was taken out of here in a barrel. What do you know about it?"

"There!" exclaimed the hotel proprietor, smiting his huge hand on the bar. "I told those fellers they were cooking up a dish of trouble. And I don't want you chaps down at headquarters to get the idea in your nuts that I had anything to do with it."

"But he was in your cellar——"

"Hold on! We'll come to that in a minute. I am not afraid of the police commissioner, or the whole bunch of grafters under him! You want to get wise to that. But for the very reason that you ain't never got the dead wood on me, I don't propose that you shall!

"I'll tell you about this guy—as much as I know myself," pursued Schultz, rolling a big black cigar in his mouth as he talked. "I heard from me scrubwoman that something was going on queer in the house. She said she seen two men going up the ladder to the roof, and that hatch is supposed to be shut. I didn't know about anybody being around repairin' the roof, and I wasn't fallin' for no game I didn't see the finish of from the start, d'ye see? So I went upstairs to look."

"When was this, Schultz?" interrupted Chickering.

"Oh, it warn't noon yet. I couldn't see nobody on the roof, or any of the roofs around; but the hatch was open. So I locked it—it's a bolt fastens it, you see—and I come down here again. It was near the lunch hour, and I'm busy then.

"Well, that old crow of a scrubwoman come hiking down again about ten minutes later, and she whispered to me that them fellers had left a man on watch in some room on my top floor, and that he had opened the hatch again. I got mad; but I couldn't leave the barroom just then. I got a new lunchman, and the bartender ain't none too bright, neither.

"When I could get away for a minute I found the woman hiding in the hall, and she swore that the three men had lugged a guy in a bag down from the roof and into the cellar. Say, I was hot! I didn't know but some of these gangs had had a fight, one of the boobs had croaked, and they was trying to drop the stiff in my cellar.

"So I tumbled down there and shiled into the bunch. I give 'em a few, and then I found out who they was. Well, I——"

"And who were they?" interjected Chick.

"None of your blamed business!" declared Schultz, and looking at Chick for the first time with suspicion. "Don't you know them yourself? Why are you rubbering around here, then? Don't expect to get corroborative evidence out of me, do you? Forget it, cull! Back up! You'd better can that idea right at the start. I'll talk to you as long as you're on the square. But this ain't no confession, and won't be labeled such—see? I'm not that kind of a man. What I'm saying to you now I wouldn't stand for a minute in court. And I'm mighty sure that no third party is a-hearing of me talk right now, either!"

"All right," said Chick, smiling. "You misconstrued my meaning, Schultz. But go ahead."

"I was wise in a minute to who they was, and, of course, I knowed who they was working for. They told me. I don't owe nothing to Denny Haloran, or anybody else. However, I didn't have nothin' against the guys themselves, and they was probably turnin' an honest penny——"

"A what?" inquired Chick.

Schultz grinned and winked. "Any penny that's earned is honest enough these days, I reckon," he said. "However, I seen what they was up to. They'd got the guy ready to ship somewhere, and he was lively enough, although he was bagged up. They wanted to leave him till dark, but I give 'em half an hour to git him out. I wasn't hunting trouble. And, see! I'd have had it in loads. Here you butt in on me, makin' cracks, and the afternoon ain't half gone.

"Well, I chased those guys in a hurry. They got a truckman and put the fellow in a barrel, headed it up, knocked the bung out to give him air, and carted him away. And that's all, bo. If you swore me on a stack of Bibles I wouldn't tell you a thing more."

Now, there were four questions—four very important questions—that Chick Carter was anxious to ask. They were:

First, Did Schultz know who the prisoner was?

Second, Who were the three men who had the prisoner in charge?

Third, Where had they brought him from, and where did they take him on leaving the saloon cellar?

Fourth, Who was the truckman engaged to transfer the barrel and its live freight?

But Schultz had already refused to answer certain questions, and Chick knew better than to try to make him. He would only encourage the man in his obstinacy, did he do so. So the detective acted as

though he were perfectly satisfied with the information he had gained from the saloon keeper, shook hands with him, and strolled out of the place.

Some hanger-on about Schultz's saloon might have seen the barrel taken out of the cellar, and would know who the truckman was that transferred it; but Chick refrained from asking the porter, or the bottblack on the corner, or anybody else who might report his questioning to Schultz.

The incident had occurred about noontime; the corner would have been a busy scene at that hour; several hundred people must have seen the barrel taken out, and have observed the three men who had been engaged in securing this Unknown for Denny Haloran.

But diagonally across the street was the stand of a truckman; at least, there was a covered wagon and an express wagon standing there, with two or three men loafing about, evidently waiting for a job. These fellows might easily have been called over to help dispose of the man in the barrel; and if they didn't get the job, they would be likely to know who did.

When Chick passed over to this corner he found that the men were Italians, and when he asked for "the boss" a short, sturdy fellow, with a complexion almost as dark as a negro's, and wearing big gold rings in his ears, came forward.

"You gotta da job—eh?" he asked, with such a smile as only those of the Latin races can display.

"Not just now; I was asking about one that maybe you had to-day."

"You no gotta job?" returned the Italian, shaking his head.

"Say! You don't expect to have every job in the neighborhood, do you?" demanded Chick. "Didn't you have one this noon? Didn't you take that barrel out of Schultz's cellar, and cart it away?"

"Outa da cel'r?" queried the man, pointing across at the saloon where Chick had just made his inquiries.

"That's it. The barrel, you know."

"No, boss. I no getta dat job."

"You saw the barrel rolled out of the cellar, didn't you?"

The Italian nodded. "I saw eet," he said.

"You knew the man who took it away on his truck?"

"Sure. I knowa heem. He da big feller. He have da stand on Firs' Av'noo. He's name-a Sam."

"Is the stand near the corner of Fourth Street?" queried Chick quickly.

"Hes standa—dat Sam—on da corner of Fift' Street. You gotta job, boss? I gotta better team dan Sam. You geev me-a da job, eh?" and the fellow displayed a most ingratiating smile.

"If I had a job I'd sure give it to you," declared Chick. "And I'm much obliged to you. *Grazie, signore!* Thanks!"

He hurried over to the other avenue and easily found the truckman's stand at the corner of East Fifth Street. There was but one wagon and one pair of horses; but there was a gayly painted little desk set against the brick wall of the building on the corner, and a new sign which read: "Sam Boss, Moving Van; Expressing and Trucking; Trunks Stored, 25c. per Month."

And Sam himself was in evidence—a burly, crisp-haired giant, with a rather broad but smiling face. Chick remembered of hearing Patsy Garvan speak of this man and his wife; they had had some small connection with Patsy's investigations into the loss of Mrs. Johnstone Ridler's necklace and the assault on the old doll surgeon.

The remembrance of this fact, however, did not cause Chick to suspect who the man was that he was searching for. He understood that Denny Haloran, the Policy King, had ordered the capture and detention of an unknown individual; and it did not cross Chick's mind at all that the person was Patsy!

Without introducing himself to Boss, Chick broached the subject of his job that noon.

"Somebody called you to-day to take a barrel from the Schultz Hotel over yonder—is that right, Mr. Boss?"

"That's right, I guess. You mean Haloran's barrel of bottled beer? He must be going to have a blowout. Wasn't it all right?"

"It's all right, I guess," said Chick slowly. "But where did you take the barrel to?"

"Why, didn't I just tell you? There could not have been any mistake in the delivery, with all them fellers along."

"What fellows? Who were they?" asked Chick quickly.

"See here, mister," returned Sam suspiciously. "I don't understand you. I make it a practice never to tell anything about my jobs. I won't tell you more than I already have unless I know you have mighty good reason for your curiosity."

"Look here!" said Chick. "I bet I can guess the name of one of the fellows that put you onto the job. Wasn't it Joe McNally?"

This idea had come to Chick like an inspiration. He had never seen Joe, but he had heard a good deal about him during the conduct of this case.

"You seem to know about all that's necessary," growled Sam. "What's the matter, anyway? What was Joe up to? Anything queer about that barrel?"

"I guess the barrel was all right," returned Chick. "And you took it to Denny Haloran's old house up on Twelfth Street, did you?"

"Well, if you say so you're not far wrong," admitted Sam Boss.

Chick knew all about Haloran, and was well aware where the Policy King had his headquarters. The detective thanked Boss, and walked immediately southward toward the location of the Twelfth Street residence of Denny Haloran.

On his way Chick halted at the cellar of a certain Italian junk dealer. With this man he had had dealings before, when he and Nick were tracing the New York end of the conspiracy that had resulted in the

death of Lieutenant Petrosini, the famous Central Office detective. This Italian, though living in squalor, and apparently as hard-working as any of his Sicilian brethren, was really an agent of the secret service of the Italian government.

Chick dived into this cellar, explained his need to the Italian, and in half an hour ventured forth again, with one of the junk dealer's own pushcarts, and clad and made up like a veritable pushcart man.

Chick could speak Italian pretty well—not only the language of polite society, but some of the dialects. He went directly to Twelfth Street, but once on the block where the Haloran residence was situated, he began to make a canvass of the houses for rags, bottles, and junk of all kinds. He did not make many bargains, but he killed considerable time, and had opportunity to examine the house of the Policy King thoroughly.

It was a four-story, American basement house, with a narrow covered passage on one side leading back to the yard. Chick saw two or three men come out of the house and go away in different directions; and other men came to the house, too, during the half hour that he was near.

It was growing dark and the street lights were already lit when the supposed Italian rag dealer stopped with his jangling bells before the gate of the narrow passage beside the Haloran house. The gate was ajar and the ragman boldly pushed it open and peered into the passage.

"Hey! what you lookin' for, Wop?" demanded a rough voice, and a figure suddenly appeared before the disguised detective.

"You sella da rag?—da bot'—da br-r-rass an' da iron—eh?" demanded Chick.

"Aw, git out with you!"

"No sella nottin'? I geeva you good mon'—eh?" said Chick, in a most wheedling tone.

"Who's that, Joe?" queried another voice in the dark alley.

"A wop with a pushcart."

"Hully gee! Just the thing, Joe," exclaimed the second voice.

Chick saw the man who had first spoken to him jerked back from the gate, and he distinguished their voices whispering together in the passage. He once heard:

"We gotter get him away. The boss says so, and you know he means what he says, Joe."

"I'll git Sam and his truck again——"

"Sam'll be asking nasty questions. We can't use the barrel again. It's smashed. No. Sam can't be used a second time. But this wop——"

Chick heard no more, but the conference lasted only a few seconds. Then the second man appeared at the gateway.

"Say, Wop!" he began. "You wanta carna da fi' dol'—heh?"

"Eh?" queried the disguised detective suspiciously.

"You wanta make da fi' dollar—heh?" repeated the man, evidently under the impression that, because the Italian spoke brokenly himself, he could better understand broken English.

"I like to make fi' dollars—sure!" admitted Chick, but not too eagerly. "You gotta da job, boss?"

"We got to take something 'cross town, and we want to use your pushcart. You can take out your rags and stay here with the bags while we use the cart. I'll give you five dollars—and you keep your mouth shut about it."

"Geeva me da fi' dollar to no tella on you—heh?" asked Chick, grinning.

"That's right, wop. And for the use of the cart. Only want it an hour. We'll bring it right back."

"And paya me first—eh?"

"He's sharp," grumbled the other man.

"All right, Joe!" declared the first speaker. "We'll pay you on the spot. Bring your bags in here. I guess you can stay in the cellar where it's warm. Wait a minute, now."

While the puzzled Chick was unloading his pushcart the gate was shut and he heard the two men open a door and evidently bring something heavy up out of the cellar of the Haloran house. There was a door handy to this street gate.

Then the gate was opened and Chick shouldered a huge bag of rags and carried it through the gate. It was pitch dark in the alley, but a single gas jet flared at the foot of the cellar stairs and he could see his way down. He carried his burden into the furnace room and then went back for some more odds and ends in the cart.

He knew that some bulky object lay in the lane beyond this cellar door. In the furnace room was a smashed barrel and a lot of straw. Chick was somewhat puzzled, but he guessed that these two men were about to carry away from Haloran's house the person who had been brought there in the beer bottle barrel earlier in the day.

The detective did not believe this was anything as serious as murder. The men did not show that measure of fear and suspicion that would surely have controlled them had they been trying to dispose of the corpse of a murdered man.

Now, Chick wanted to get into the Haloran house, for he half suspected that Maria Deculto might be hidden in it; but he wanted to get this unknown person who had been brought here so strangely and was now evidently being carried away secretly by two of Haloran's henchmen. He had to choose, that was sure, between these two desires. He could not remain in the house and follow the pair with the pushcart at the same time!

"All right, Joe. We'll bring your cart back in an hour," said the leader of the two men to the disguised detective. "Wait right here for us."

He pushed Chick down the steps into the cellar, and shut the door. Chick opened it again ever so softly and peered out of a narrow crack. He saw that the men were dragging between them the heavy

object—it appeared to be a bag a good deal like the one Chick himself had brought into the cellar—out of the gateway to the street. There was just light enough on the street for him to see that they dumped this bag unceremoniously into the pushcart, and threw in with it several other bags and such like culch. The load on the pusheart looked much as it had before Chick had taken out his belongings.

Then one of the men came back and closed the gate. Chick darted out of the cellar and crept to the end of the passage. He tried the gate. It was locked and there was no means of unlocking it without the key!

The passage was roofed over, and there was only a narrow space between the top of the gate and the roof—too narrow for Chick to crawl through, even had he desired to so attract attention to himself.

He ran softly back to the rear end of the passage. There was another locked door there. He could not get into the yard of the house, from which he might have escaped by passing through some other yard.

The two men with whom he had made his bargain had certainly trapped the accommodating "Italian." Chick went back into the cellar and closed the door. If there was anything for him to do further, it was not outside the house. The mysterious individual who had been so secretly brought to the house by Haloran's retainers, had, in all probability, been taken away again. But there might be other secrets of the headquarters of the Policy King which Chick might investigate, and the detective was in a mood to take chances in such investigation—and at the present time!

## CHAPTER X.

### ADELINA ON THE SCENT.

Adelina Garvan was a beautiful young woman, and Nick had warned her repeatedly against going about the city unattended, especially after nightfall. She was resourceful and brave, and had shown herself quite able to take care of herself; but usually, when there was a job on hand in which Patsy's beautiful wife had a part, she disguised herself before leaving Nick's residence.

Adelina was famous for her old women's disguises, and it was into one of these that she stepped when, as Patsy did not return and Nick had phoned a couple of times about him, she started downtown to look for her husband. She knew as much as Nick knew about Patsy's disappearance. He had started, after the arrest of Dawley and Sylvester Deculto, to call on Jerry Mellen, the old doll surgeon, on East Fourth Street, in the heart of Little Germany.

Adelina came into this neighborhood attired in a rather rusty black dress, bonnet, and shoft veil. She did not wear the veil to hide her face, for that was so well made up that scarcely Patsy himself would have known who she was. At least, nobody would have given her a second glance because of her youth and beauty!

She looked like a neat, but poor, woman of the working class, and even her bare hands seemed wrinkled and gnarled. This disguising of the hands to simulate age was an art that Adelina had gotten perfect through long practice. She had even invented some of the preparations she used. For instance, there was a quickly hardening rubber cement that she used to increase the size of the knickles, to imitate the effect upon those fingers of a person who has, for years, had her hands much in cold water. One could shake hands firmly with Adelina and not discover the fact that her hand was disguised.

Thus disfigured, Patsy's wife was not likely to be molested in any quarter of the town. She approached the house wherein dwelt the old doll surgeon after the lights began to be lit; but the winter twilight was coming fast. There were plenty of people on the street, especially children playing.

Adelina spoke to one boy whom she chanced to see loafing along ahead of her. He was rather a well-dressed chap, but he wore his clothing carelessly, his linen was dirty, and when he turned to look up at her he displayed a thin, freckled, and impudently smiling face, with the biggest and most protruding eyes lighting it up that one ever saw!

"Whachu want, lady?" he asked, on the verge of slipping out of her grasp, for Adelina had laid her hand suddenly on his shoulder.

"Don't be afraid of me, boy," said Adelina. "I only want to ask you a question."

"I ain't much scaret of you, missus," said the gamin, grinning more broadly than before. "But don't ax me any pussonal questions, for I'm bashful."

"I'll give you a penny if you will show me where an old man named Jerry Mellen lives," said Adelina.

"Awr-r, chee!" respouded the urchin. "Don't yer break yerself offerin' rewards like dat. A penny! I wouldn't know wot ter do wit' so much cush—dat's right!"

"I couldn't promise you no more——" began Adelina, in a quavering voice, but the boy interrupted her:

"Hully chee! Can it, missus! I don't wancher forchune—nish fer mish! Nix fer muh! Come along wit' me. I know jes' where dat Mellen bloke lives."

"Thank you, boy," murmurred the disguised young woman, but keeping a good hold on the collar of the urchin. When they had walked a few yards and were out of earshot of everybody else on the pavement, she whispered suddenly:

"Why aren't you at work, Pop-eye? What are you loafing around here for?"

The boy jumped, and this time he would have jerked away from her restraining grip did not Adelina hiss in his ear:

"I am Adelina Garvan! Don't you know me?"

"A-r-r, chee! What a scare yer trun inter me, Mis' Garvan!" exclaimed the street gamin, who was the latest protégé of Nick Carter's, and in whom all of Nick's older assistants had a deep interest.

Nick had rescued "Pop-eye," as he was called, be-

cause of his protuberant optics, from starvation and from the streets. He had found him a home, clothed him, and sent him to night school. The detective insisted that, when the ex-street waif was not helping him on his cases, that Pop-eye should be engaged in some serious occupation, and usually the boy worked in an office downtown.

Pop-eye had done some shadowing in the matter of the loss of the Ridler necklace, and after the arrests made that forenoon, Adelina fancied that Pop-eye had not gone back to his usual occupation. And this proved to be a shrewd guess on her part.

"What are you loafing around here for?" Adelina repeated as they approached the house where the "doll hospital" was situated, and which she knew very well.

"I didn't t'ink 'twas any use goin' back to de offis to-day, Missus Garvan," he said rather sheepishly. "An' den—— Say! wot brought youse down here?" he suddenly shot at her, his head on one side and his prominent eyes rolling dangerously near the point of falling out!

"What do you mean?" asked Adelina. "Why am I down here?"

"Yep. Ant all fixed up so't you look like an old woman. Chee! yer great on de disguise biz, y'are. Is Patsy in it?"

"In what?"

"In dis game?" declared the gamin. "I seen him go into dis joint myself."

"Into Jerry Melleri's?"

"Sure. Right after we made that haul up on Second Avenue. I wanted to foller along to the police station an' see wot dey done wit' dem fellers—de fat guy named Dawley, an' de wop, Sylvest'. But I was afraid Mr. Carter would chase me."

"He probably would have told you to go back to the office."

"Ar-r, chee! I git a pain in me lungs bein' shut up in dat joint all de time, an' dat's no lie! I follered Patsy down here."

"I know he came here to call——"

"An' y' ain't seed him since?" cried Pop-eye, with sudden excitement. "Is dat right? Gimme de straight offis. I got sumpin ter tell yer, I bet! Are yer lookin' for yer husban', Mis' Garvan?"

Adelina could no longer hide her natural anxiety. She seized Pop-eye by both shoulders, and shook him a little.

"Yes, yes!" she cried. "Tell me! Have you seen him?"

"Not since he went in here just before noontime."

"What, then, do you know?"

"That he hasn't come out," replied Pop-eye.

"You don't mean——"

"I mean he ain't come out the way he went in," declared the gamin. "Mebbe it's all right, though. Don't yer be scaret, Mis' Garvan."

"I'm not scared, Pop-eye," declared Adelina firmly. "I believe that Patsy can usually take care of himself. Besides, you may be mistaken. You could not have watched this door all the afternoon."

"You bet I have!"

"Sure?"

"I ain't let nobody go in and out without knowin' who they was. And I'll tell you why!" said the observant youngster. "After Mr. Garvan went in, that Joe McNally, wot we first t'ought swiped the diamonds, come here. He went upstairs an' den he come down, an' I see him chewin' de rag wit' a little goil; an' he give her a nickel.

"She waited till Mr. Garvan come out of old Mellen's, and she spoke to him. She pointed upstairs, and I could see Mr. Garvan was puzzled-like. But by me by he pats de kid on the head and goes up like a shot.

"Now, I waits around, like I tells you, but he don't come out——"

"Did that McNally come back?"

"Nix. I seen him around Schultz's place, yonder, along the block. That was ha'f an hour later. Him and some more guys was gettin' a barrel out of the rumhole's cellar, and Sam Boss took it away in his truck. But lemme tell yer. I got sore waitin' so long for Mr. Garvan, an' I seed the kid dat give him de message, and I fixed her what McNally told her to say. She said Missus Boss wanted to speak to Mr. Garvan."

"That is the young woman Patsy was telling us about, who lives on the upper floor of this house?"

"Yes'm. It's Sam Boss' wife."

"And she wanted to see Patsy?" queried Adelina, much puzzled.

"That's what Joe McNally told the kid to say to Patsy," observed Pop-eye, with significant emphasis.

"But he hasn't come down from there?" murmured Adelina.

"And you can bet I've been upstairs," said Pop-eye. "I begun to git leary, I did. I went up and knocked on the door. The flat's empty."

"Are you sure, Pop-eye?" cried Adelina.

"You bet I am! I knocked till I raised the woman next door. She's a deef old party named Schlagel. She said Missus Boss had gone over to her sister's early this morning, that Sam wasn't home to dinner, and that neither of 'em would likely be home before night."

"And perhaps Patsy is locked into that flat of theirs now!" ejaculated Adelina.

"Nix! The old woman had the key. Mis' Boss had left it with her, so if Sam should come home first he could get in. And the old lady was goin' to build Mis' Boss' fire for her so't it would be burnin' fresh for supper. I got her to take me in there, and I looked all through the flat."

"And no sign of Patsy?"

"He warn't there," declared Pop-eye slowly. "But I reckon somebody had been in the joint. Things was tumbled about a good deal in the front room. There was a chair broke, and things was thrown around. I think there's been a fight."

"Patsy has fallen into a trap!" declared Adelina.

"Mebbe. But I didn't know what to think. I been hanging around to see what come of it, or to see the Bosses—— Huh! here they come, now!" Pop-eye broke off suddenly to say.

"Who?"

"Sam Boss and his wife. She's a nifty-lookin' goil, ain't she? They ain't been married a year yet, and he thinks the sun jest about rises an' sets when she says so. Chee! ain't it funny how a husky guy like dat Sam Boss gits mushy over a skoit?"

At another time Adelina would have been immensely amused by the boyish disgust of sentiment displayed by the gamin. But she was too anxious now to either be amused, or to postpone making a direct inquiry of the truckman and his wife, who came along the sidewalk, his arms full of bundles, and both laughing happily.

Adelina stepped in front of the couple before they could enter the door. Sam looked at her bovinely, but his little wife shrank rather hurriedly from the commanding figure of the disguised detective.

"Mrs. Boss, I believe?" said Adelina, in a tone and manner in keeping with her present character.

"This is my wife—yes, ma'am," said Sam, as Mayme hesitated from either bashfulness or because she intuitively feared what was coming.

"Forgive me for seeming impertinence," said Adeline softly, "but have you been away from home all day, Mrs. Boss?"

"What's the matter?" demanded Sam, as Mayme nodded silently. "Anything wrong, missus?" and he looked up at the face of the brick tenement. "It seems to be all here. We ain't been burned out, have we?"

"There has been no fire," said Adelina.

"Mayme's been over to her sister's," continued Sam. "What's happened? What do you want of us?"

"Did you leave your flat locked, Mrs. Boss?" asked Adelina, speaking each time to the young woman, whose emotion she did not yet understand.

"By jings! we've been robbed," suggested Sam. "Well, they couldn't ha' got much. Our little boodle —what there is of it—is safe in the savings bank—and in the little woman's name, eh, Mayme?"

Mayme Boss found her voice then. She asked breathlessly:

"What are you asking these questions for? Who are you? Of course I locked our flat. I left the key with Mrs. Schlagel."

"And there isn't but one key to the flat?"

"We lost the other key to the kitchen door. There was two," said Sam. "We don't use the front-door key, do we, Mayme? What's the matter, kid? Are yer scared? Say, missus! you'd better let out what's the matter without beating about the bush so much. Mayme's getting nervous."

"I will be direct," said Adelina. "I am looking for a Mr. Garvan. You both remember him as a person who came to you to make some inquiries——"

"About that Joe McNally—yes," grunted Sam. "By the way, Mayme, Joe brought me a little job to-day, and appeared to be awful friendly."

"Do you know how friendly he is, Mr. Boss?" said Adelina, at last exasperated by the silence of the young woman before her, and perhaps with a spice of venom in her mood, too. She believed that this big, good-natured truckman was being fooled by his pretty wife and her relatives.

"What d'ye mean, ma'am?" demanded Sam.

"Joe McNally sent a message to Mr. Garvan this morning, stating that your wife wished to see Garvan in her flat upstairs——"

"Oh, I never, Sam!" shrieked Mayme suddenly, flinging her arms about her husband's neck.

"Don't be an unnecessarily greater fool than you already have been," said Adelina tartly. "Nobody is accusing you of any wrongdoing—nothing but idiocy. You left your flat all day. You had some intimation, I'll be bound, that Joe wanted to use the flat. You had no idea of going to your sister's for the day when your husband went to business this morning, did you?"

Mayme was silent. Big Sam said, slowly and in a husky voice:

"She come over to my stand and told me, about eleven o'clock—or later. That's the first I heard of it."

"So? And Joe McNally used the flat to toll Garvan to. There are signs of a fight up there, I understand. Garvan did not come out of the house in any ordinary way. There has been somebody on the watch. Say! what sort of a job was this Joe McNally brought you, Mr. Boss?"

"Oh, oh! don't listen to her, Sam," sobbed Mayme. "She's trying to make trouble between us——"

"Nonsense! This is no fooling matter, Mr. Boss," interrupted Adelina. "This is something that may entangle everybody concerned in a serious crime. Joe McNally is working for the Policy King, Denny Haloran——"

"And that's the sorry truth!" muttered Sam.

"Mr. Garvan may be considered dangerous by those policy people. An arrest was made on Second Avenue to-day partly through Mr. Garvan's instrumentality and——"

"Dawley's joint was pulled. I heard about it," declared the truckman.

"Haloran may be after Mr. Garvan. In fact, it is more than probable that policy is at the root of this whole matter."

"Curse it!" groaned Sam Boss, "I've warned yer, Mayme. And now, see what's come of letting that nephew of yours come here!"

"But he brought you a job to-day," said Adelina quickly.

"So he did. I wisht I hadn't taken it. But it was only a small one."

"What was it?"

"Takin' a barrel of bottled beer up to—— By thunder! I took it to Denny Haloran himself!"

"A barrel?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure there was bottled beer in it?"

"So them guys said."

"But you do not know positively?"

"That's right—I don't," admitted the truckman. "And there's been somebody else asking me about that same, too."

"Who was it?" queried Adelina suspiciously.

Sam described Chickering Carter so exactly that Patsy's wife could not mistake. Then Chick was on the trail of the missing man, too! Adelina at once felt somewhat relieved.

"You come upstairs with us, missus," said Sam, understanding suddenly that Adelina had a strong personal interest in Patsy Garvan. "Let's see what them fellers did in our flat. And you got to straighten this out, Mayme. You got to prove to this lady that you ain't at fault. That blasted Joe! I'll break every bone in his skin!"

He led his sobbing wife into the house. Adelina stayed a moment to whisper to the alert Pop-eye, who had taken in every word of the conversation.

"Run up to Denny Haloran's house on Twelfth Street. Do you know where it is, Pop-eye?"

"I kin ask," said the gamin. "I ain't lost me tongue."

"See if you can find Chickering Carter anywhere thereabout. Hang around, yourself, anyway, until something happens, or I come. I believe Patsy is a prisoner there. We must rescue him!" exclaimed the anxious wife.

## CHAPTER XI.

### POP-EYE TO THE RESCUE.

It was dark when Pop-eye came to the block where the Policy King's house was situated. He had asked a butcher's boy which was Haloran's, and had it pointed out to him.

Now, Pop-eye was observant, but he could not have guessed in a week that the Italian with the pushcart and the jangling bells, who appeared to be buying rags and junk from house to house, was Chick Carter in disguise!

Pop-eye saw Chick; he saw him enter into conversation with the two men at the gate beside Haloran's house, and he saw Chick remove his own goods from the cart, including his string of "chimes."

Then the two men—and one of them was Joe McNally—hustled a heavy bag into the pushcart, threw some more bags over it, and trundled the cart away. The Italian remained within the house.

But Pop-eye was not interested in the Italian. He considered that, although Adelina had not appeared, something of sufficient importance was happening to excuse his leaving the vicinity. He set out to trail the men and the pushcart without a suspicion of what was in it!

Pop-eye would have been more excited by what happened soon after his departure from the block on which Haloran's house stood. Around the corner came a big Panhard automobile, with a burly man in the back, and a small fellow under the wheel, and it stopped directly before Haloran's door.

The big man got out, saying:

"You'd better stay right where you are, Pinkus. I may only stay a moment, anyway."

He started to cross the sidewalk just as a bigger automobile—one with a limousine body—likewise shot up to the door and stopped directly behind the Panhard.

"Hello, who's this?" muttered the gentleman who had left the first machine. He had already touched the push button beside Haloran's door, and he turned his back on the entrance now to stare at the man who left the second automobile.

This individual appeared to be alone. He had driven the car himself, at least. But he was not a regular chauffeur.

He stepped up to the first man who had arrived at the Policy King's door just as that door was opened from the inside.

"Hello!" exclaimed the burly fellow, barring the way to the second man. "Are you going in here?"

"You've guessed it just right, my friend," returned the other.

"I—you—— Don't I know you?" blurted out the first man.

"I think you ought to know me, Mr. Massy," was the reply.

At the same moment the person who had opened the door exclaimed:

"What do you want, gentlemen?"

It was a man, but he did not have the air of a trained servant. Nor was it Haloran himself.

"I want to see the boss," said Massy, looking over his shoulder at the man behind.

"So do I," added the second caller.

"Say! who the devil are you?" suddenly snapped Massy, wheeling on the other man and laying a hand on his shoulder. "What do you want to see Haloran for?"

"'Sh!" warned the man in the doorway.

"I don't trust this fellow!" began Massy, who evidently had been drinking.

Suddenly his antagonist grabbed him around the body, pinioning Massy's arms to his sides. With a single heave he pitched Massy backward through the door, overturning the man who had opened the portal.

"On deck, Danny!" shouted this extremely vigorous person.

"I'm with you, chief!" returned the young fellow who had sprung from Massy's automobile.

They were all in the house and the door was banged to in a moment. Nick Carter stood over the prostrate men in the hall, a gun in either hand.

"You fellows keep quiet till I see Haloran," he exclaimed. "You know me, I guess, Massy, after all—and I know you!"

"Nick Carter, as I live!" ejaculated the renegade clubman.

"Is it Nick Carter, the detective?" cried the other man. "Well, you won't find Mr. Haloran here. He's never here. He's leased the house long ago. You are in all wrong, Nick Carter. And you can't break into a man's house——"

At the moment a door behind the speaker opened and there came into the hall two persons. Rather, one of these newcomers was forced into the hall by the other.

The first was a woman—Maria Deculto. And she was held in the tight grip of a man who had every appearance of being her fellow countryman.

"Just in time to take this woman down to headquarters, Nick," declared the apparent Italian, in Chick's own voice. "She tried to stick a knife into me, too, when I found her in the housekeeper's sitting room downstairs. Haloran and his men evidently didn't get her quite to Mulberry Street when they took her from the —th Precinct station to-day. But she was on her way—on her way!" and Chick laughed.

"Good job, Chick, my boy!" declared Nick Carter. "Who else is in the house?"

"Nobody but these two fellows," said Chick. "I've searched the ranch from cellar to roof. I believe there has been a prisoner brought here in a barrel——"

"In a barrel?" cried Danny.

"Yes. But he's not here now. And I have a suspicion——"

The front doorbell rang again. Danny opened it. A veiled lady stood there and, without a word, she stepped across the threshold. But when she spoke Nick and his assistants recognized Adelina.

"Is Patsy with you?" she demanded.

"No, my dear," replied Nick quietly.

"I believe he was here to-day. I think he was brought here against his will——"

"In a barrel!" cried Chick.

"Yes, Chickering," returned the young woman anxiously. "Do you know what has happened to him? What has that Denny Haloran done to poor Patsy?"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Chick. "I believe I had the boy right under my eye and let them get away with him."

"Who?" demanded Nick.

"Joe McNally and another. They borrowed my cart to wheel him away in, I bet! Here! you take care of this woman—— No, you don't, my dear!" he cried, as Maria Deculto made a spring to try and break his hold.

Chick had her handcuffed in a moment, and he passed her over to Adelina. "You take care of her, Adelina. She's our star witness—isn't that right, chief?"

"Correct," admitted Nick. "Danny, you would better put the bracelets on these other fellows, too."

"If you arrest me, Carter!" yelled Lyndon Massy, "it will be the sorriest job you ever did!"

"You'll be handcuffed, just the same, Massy," said the detective. "I think we can get enough out of Pinkus, who is a prisoner in my automobile outside, to put you through the mill, Mr. Massy!

"That's right, Danny. Both handcuffed? You go with Chick and find Patsy. Adelina and I will remain with the prisoners——"

Chick had already flung open the door. On the sidewalk, closely examining Nick's big car, was an urchin with very protuberant eyes.

"Hully chee!" exclaimed this lad, when Chick and Danny hurried forth. "Ain't Mr. Carter inside? I t'ought I knowed this machine. Is dat you, Danny? And Mr. Chickering? Chee! dis is great luck I'm playin' to."

"What's up, Pop-eye?" demanded Chick, as Danny started the engine of Nick's big limousine.

"Chee! You're de dago dat give up de cart to them guys—Joe McNally and dat odder?"

"Right," admitted Chick.

"You never knowed what they carried away from here, did yer? Nor where they took it?"

"I'm beginning to have the glimmering of an idea," admitted Chick. "Did you see them, Pop-eye? Did you follow them?"

"Betcher life! But I dunno what it was. Say! they ain't croaked Mr. Garvan, has they?"

"I hope to Heaven they haven't! And I don't believe they have. Joe McNally hasn't pluck enough to kill a man, or have anything to do with a killing."

"I dunno about that," said Pop-eye eagerly. "Lemme tell youse——"

"All ready, Chick," cried Danny.

"Hop into the car with us, kid," said Chick. "Where did those fellows go with the pushcart?"

Pop-eye named a certain East River dock.

"Hit the high places only, Danny!" commanded Chickering. "For Heaven's sake, Pop-eye, you don't mean that they have dumped him into the river?"

"Nix! Or I wouldn't be here, you bet! I'd be fishin' the bag out—if Mr. Garvan was in the bag. But they dumped the bag onto a barge that's lying there. It's one of the contractor's barges that takes ashes out to sea to dump—you know?"

"By Heaven! yes!"

"Them fellers knowed the watchman. They got him to let 'em run the cart right out onto the barge, that was already loaded. Then they beat it, but they stopped in a saloon, and I got back to the house before they did. I expected to find Mrs. Garvan there, and I was goin' to tell her."

"And what's become of the barge?"

"There's a tug coming for it. The string of barges is bein' made up now. If nobody notices that bag, and if Patsy Garvan is in it, when de bottom of dat barge drops out, at sea, he'll go down wit' de rest of de rubbidge! Hully chee! ain't dat the limit?" cried Pop-eye.

And it would certainly have been a tough finish for Patsy had not the sharp-eyed gamin played his part in the wind-up of the affair. The automobile reached the dock just as the barge was being cast off from her moorings.

Chick leaped aboard with a lantern snatched from the watchman's hand, found the bag on the heap of ashes, and slit it quickly open with his knife. Out rolled Patsy Garvan—but a very much-battered and quite unconscious Patsy.

Later it was learned that the masked men, whom he supposed to be Haloran and Massy, had tried to make him tell of Nick Carter's plans in his attack on the policy game, and had used most ingenious and brutal ways of torturing their victim.

Patsy had remained dumb. He had uttered no word during the ordeal. Then his tormentors had evidently been warned that Nick Carter might make a raid on the house, and it was planned to get rid of Patsy.

In fact, had not Pop-eye done his part, the case might have ended far more seriously for Patsy Garvan, nor would Nick Carter have obtained the evidence or made the arrests which he did in the case.

Joe McNally and his mate were captured when they returned to the Twelfth Street house, with the "accommodating wop's" pushcart, and joined the handcuffed trio in the front hall.

Morris Pinkus, Lyndon Massy's chauffeur, was kept away from the other prisoners, and later, as Nick expected, the young man turned State's evidence against his employer and Massy was meshed in the strong web of evidence Nick wove to convict those who had a hand in the attempted rescue of Maria Deculto.

The others, too, were due to be punished for their treatment of Patsy Garvan. The only unfortunate thing was that there was no direct evidence against Dennis Haloran, the Policy King. That fellow was a very astute man, indeed. He had, months before, leased his house in Twelfth Street. Nobody had seen him go in and out for months. And certainly Patsy could not declare positively that he knew the masked man who had examined him in the house to be the head of the policy game in New York.

But the arrest of his helpers and henchmen certainly put a stopper—for a time, at least—upon the Policy King's activities. Nick Carter had been eminently successful to that end!

THE END.

The next number (682) will contain the most exciting of all the stories in connection with the Policy King and his gang. The title is "The Madman's Gig; or, Nick Carter Delivers a Knockout." And a knockout blow it is in more than one respect. The renowned detective and his aids solve a mystery that puts the headquarters detective in a hopeless dilemma, and makes you wonder, all the time you are reading, how the dickens the thing is to be done. It is simply an unheard-of puzzle that Nick Carter is called on to solve. Get the next number—682—don't forget it—and you'll have a story you are sure to like.

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## THE GUIDE'S WARNING.

IT was during the summer and autumn of the year, if I remember rightly, that I was traveling through a portion of Spain, partly upon business, and partly to observe and study the country and character of the inhabitants.

One fine morning in early autumn, I set out to make the journey of about twenty English miles, which lay between the village where I had stopped during the night preceding, and the one where I proposed to pass the next.

We found the journey quite pleasant until we reached a large forest, known by the somewhat significant title of "The Great Wood." Here the way was dark and lonely, yet with skill and diligence we finally succeeded in reaching the outskirts, and very soon after this we were within view of the village in question.

I confess I was surprised somewhat when I came in sight of the place. I had expected to see a small village, scattered along for a considerable distance, yet such was not the case. A large, dreary mountain arose, in all its grandeur, and nestled close around its base lay the dark, somber village of Sorna. The houses, such as were visible, were of a dull, dusky hue, which, combined with the bald, dismal-looking brow of the mountain, towering far above, gave the place any other rather than an inviting aspect. Still, in the entire appearance of the place there was something peculiar, and in a measure romantic; so, seating myself upon a soft, mossy bank, I regarded the spectacle for some minutes in silence.

There was nothing grand or splendid in the scenes which I viewed, and yet there was something quite charming in the simple picture. A small, placid river ran in front of me, and upon its opposite bank, huddled around the foot of the stern old mountain, reposed the hundred or two of dusky houses which composed Sorna.

It was near sunset, and tired and hungry as we were, we lost little time in seeking that rest and refreshment of which we stood so much in need. A rough, rickety-looking bridge spanned the placid current of the river, and across this we soon picked our way into the streets of the place.

I found, as I gazed around me, that externally the appearance of the place spoke well. The houses, although bronzed by the sun, were still in good repair, the streets clean, and a general feeling of quiet seemed to steal over me, as I noted these agreeable traits.

Some few men were strolling or lounging about, and of one of these, who seemed to be an honest and intelligent fellow, I inquired for the best place of entertainment.

He scrutinized us for a few moments, and then replied in a measured, deliberate manner.

"Señor, it is seldom travelers pass this way, yet we are not destitute of accommodations, and, if the señors will please follow me, I will lead the way to the best house of entertainment in the village."

As the fellow seemed honest, and I had no suspicions that anything could be wrong—for the thought of danger had never entered into the remotest of my calculations—I concluded to follow him, and we accordingly set out.

After traversing several short streets, he halted before a low, unprepossessing kind of house, and, giving a peculiarly sharp rap upon the door with his knuckles, it was soon opened by a most decidedly ill-favored specimen of humanity.

Very short in stature, with an immense longitudinal bulk, head very small, and set far upon one side of a very thick and clumsy neck; hair a grizzled yellow, and ears which stood out in fearful relief, such were some of the first and most striking appearances of the singular-looking individual. The brow was like the rest of the face, very low and contracted, nearly covered with bushy, gray eyebrows.

So much I saw at a glance, and while the guide was informing him that the strangers who accompanied him had just arrived, and desired the best of accommodations.

In a moment the host turned his attentions from the personage in question to us, and in a most agreeable and pleasant manner expressed his wish and pleasure to serve us with the best his house contained or the place afforded. I was naturally somewhat suspicious of his peculiar appearance, and, before proceeding farther, I gave him a close scrutiny, as well as asking several questions, which he answered with a frankness and readiness which did much to counteract the suspicious appearances of his outer man. Still, I hesitated, until fatigue and hunger overcame prudence, and, throwing aside all suspicions, I boldly entered the large and somewhat bare room, opening directly from the street.

In a moment, almost, I repented having done so. There was but one other person in the room, and this was the hostess.

I had pronounced her partner decidedly ill-favored, and yet, in general contrast, I could not deny the thought that he was far her superior, even in personal appearance.

She was seated at a long table upon one side of the room, engaged in certain preparations for the coming evening meal.

As I entered she raised her eyes and suspended her operations for a few moments, during which time she regarded me with a fixed and searching stare.

Those features! They have been ever present with me since, and yet I feel the utter impossibility of giving any description which would bring them to the mind of the reader. A nose like the beak of a vulture, and a chin, long, sharp, and armed with many scattering, spearlike points, these, coupled with deep, sunken, burning eyes, and features in general emaciated and wrinkled, are all the peculiar traits of feature I can now recall. Like many another picture which may haunt the memory, it is impossible to present it to any other person in its true form and coloring.

After the hostess had finished her survey of me, she turned again to her work, and a scattering conversation was kept up between the five persons who now occupied the apartment.

Making a great effort, I succeeded in driving away all appearance of ill ease, though the circumstances were far from favorable. By dint of continued efforts, however, I succeeded in stilling all thoughts of wrong, and, finding my entertainers were really intelligent and agreeable in conversation, the time was slipping quite merrily away.

Having occasion to address some remark to my companion, William Brooks, I did so in English. I noticed that the guide, who had entered with us, and sat quite near me, started perceptibly, and regarded me with a fixed look for some moments, occasionally changing his glance from myself

to my comrade. In a few moments he found the opportunity he seemed to seek, and, as the attention of host and hostess were momentarily withdrawn, he asked me, almost in a whisper:

"Señor, do you understand French?"

"I do," I answered in that tongue, which I spoke quite fluently.

"Then at supper monsieur will be careful to drink no coffee," he said, in quite passable French, "for it is drugged."

I looked at him a moment in silence, then glanced at the host with a sort of inquiring look.

"Never fear him; he does not understand what we say," the fellow returned, in the same language. "But mind what I have just said, and be cautious, for you are in danger."

For a moment surprise at this unlooked-for announcement kept me silent, and, when I did open my mouth to speak, the other by a quick gesture warned me to silence, and at once joined a conversation upon some other subject. In a few moments he arose and walked into the street, leaving me utterly confounded and surprised at the unlooked-for disclosure.

Something, I thought, must be done, some information gained, or perhaps I should yet be caught in a snare from which I could with difficulty escape. Remarking the general quiet and peaceful appearance of the village, I arose, and, approaching one of the low, dingy windows, looked forth upon the street. As it would be some time before our repast would be prepared, I took advantage of the interim to stroll forth and take a momentary survey of some points which possessed unusual interest to travelers. Finding that the host seemed not in the least suspicious, I walked carelessly from the house, and was soon screened from the observation of any person within. In a few moments a person carelessly approached me. It was my peculiar acquaintance, who had so recently warned me of danger. He came up with an easy look of carelessness, and spoke, in passing, of the scenery and prospect. Conversing in an easy style, we wandered on until I was sure no ear could overhear what we said, and then I recurred to the strange warning he had but recently given me.

"I will tell you," he replied in a tone of confidence, "and I may not be enabled to tell you all. But first, I suppose you are an American. Am I not right?"

I assented, and he then went on:

"I will tell you why I first brought you to this place, and then warned you of the danger which lay before you. An American, a countryman of yours, once saved my life at the risk of his own, and in the natural gratitude of my heart I vowed to save and assist all of his countrymen whom I should meet. When I first saw you, I supposed you were a European, and thus it was that you were brought to this place. When I heard the sound of your language, I saw my mistake, and resolved at once to remedy it so far as possible."

"But," said I, "you have not told me in what manner this especial danger is to come? You have not told me how it can be avoided."

"No," he replied, with a shadow of hesitation, "nor can I tell you in full how this is to be shunned. You can only do this by being wakeful and watchful. You will be in danger of being robbed, and as it would be quite unpleasant for you to be allowed full liberty afterward, there is an old saying, which you have no doubt often heard."

"You mean that 'dead men tell no tales,'" I interrupted. "Just that."

"Then I will leave the place at once," I suggested.

"No, señor; that is now impossible. Sharp eyes are upon you, and, if you should attempt to leave the place, other means more dangerous and certain will be resorted to. You will remain in your present quarters, and by skill and address avert a danger which could not be done by mere force."

"But," I asked, in growing amazement, "have you in this place no laws, nothing to deter the criminal proceedings of which you speak? The man and his accomplices shall be arrested and held to answer for their high-handed crimes."

He laughed, as I thought, almost derisively.

"The señor knows little of law in this portion of Spain. Law is but a name, while the power lies in the hands of the outlaw. People like the side that is in power. So you will see, señor, that any resort to law would be far worse than useless, it would be dangerous."

"Then, pray tell me, señor," I exclaimed, beginning to comprehend that if what he said were really true I was in a most unenviable situation; "how am I to escape from all these perils?"

"You are armed, señor?"

I gave a nod of assent.

"There is a secret panel opening into the room you will occupy; watch that well, and be prepared to take advantage of whatever turns up."

He gave my arm a sharp pinch as he spoke and moved slowly away. I comprehended something was not right, and filled with anxious forebodings I turned my steps toward the small inn. I saw before I had passed many yards that a man was walking nearly beside me, which position he steadily maintained until he saw I was about to enter the den, when he moved away more rapidly.

As I again entered the apartment I met the sharp look that both host and hostess bent upon me, with an indifference and disregard which fully disarmed all previous suspicions, if any they had, and, as the meal was now prepared, we were soon seated at the rough, black table, prepared to discuss its merits.

Glaring at the steaming coffee beside my plate, I remarked carelessly:

"I regret the señor took the trouble of preparing coffee, as we Americans never drink the beverage."

The host stared in astonishment. He seemed confused, and essayed several questions before his tongue came to his aid.

"If you have a bottle of wine, we will discuss that," I remarked "but it is really too bad we should trouble the señor to prepare coffee."

Summoning all his suavity, he complied, in rather an awkward manner, and soon returned with the wine. Pushing a glass beside his plate, I filled it, and from the manner in which he drank I was satisfied the whole was harmless.

The meal was soon finished, and, pushing back our chairs, we remained a short time in earnest conversation with the host, after which he, at our request, lighted us to our chamber.

Here was another cause of surprise, for, instead of being conducted to a chamber, we were taken to the rear of the room in which we had thus far been entertained, and, after being conducted through several rooms and passages, we at length brought up in a small, well-furnished apartment, which we were told would be our place of repose, if we both chose to occupy one room; if we wished separate apartments another would be provided. Dismissing the host with the assurance that one would be perfectly sufficient, we were soon left to ourselves.

I threw myself upon a chair, and my companion followed my example. We listened to the retreating footsteps of the landlord until they had died away, and then we turned our gaze upon each other.

"So it seems we are in for an adventure, beyond any escape," my comrade at length remarked.

"It looks so," I replied, "and that is not all. I confess I don't see any way to get out of it."

"You learned something while you were gone?" he queried.

I informed him in brief of what had been communicated to me, and, as our conversation was carried on in English, we had no fears of being understood.

"Then it seems there is a secret panel, through which they

intend to start upon us unawares. If so had we not better look for it?"

I glanced at the miserable candle which the host had left, and, as it would soon expire, I saw that we must improve the time.

We carefully examined our pistols, and, finding that they were in good working order, I carefully raised the candle, and we commenced the examination of the walls. As they were entirely of wood, we were forced to proceed slowly and inspect the whole carefully. Yet no signs of any secret panel could we discover. The circuit of the room completed, we again stopped and gazed in anxiety around.

"Well, what do you think of this?" William asked, as he cast his eyes around the walls in listless curiosity.

Even before I could speak he uttered a quick exclamation, and started forward. But, alas! his quickness of motion extinguished the feeble candle, and we were left in chaotic blackness. A moment of appalling silence followed. William was the first to recover his speech.

"I was a fool," he exclaimed, in no very amiable mood; "just as I thought I had got upon some kind of track, here I must go and upset it all in this way."

"Did you discover anything?" I inquired, ready to grasp at any hope, however faint.

"I cannot tell now," he replied, half choking with mortification and chagrin; "I thought I had discovered some signs of the secret panel, but if I had it is all of no consequence; we can do nothing in this darkness, fool that I was."

Our condition was now helpless enough, as in more than the darkness of Erebus we stood, with a hand upon each other's shoulder to preserve our identity, gazing at the dense shadow before us. Another silence, oppressive and ominous, followed which William at length broke by asking abruptly:

"What will we do now?"

"There is but one thing we can do now," I replied; "we must watch and wait for events to take their course; certainly you have no idea of sleeping under such circumstances."

Having arranged our plan, we seated ourselves, a pistol in each hand, and our anxious vigil had commenced. The time passed drearily enough to us, I assure you. All was still—oh, so very still! The faint, tick of my watch was perfectly audible, as we awaited in stern vigilance the denouement of our singular adventure.

Something more than an hour had passed, and not the slightest sound had we heard to indicate that aught of life was around us. No word had passed between us, but grim and silent we were awaiting the expected encounter.

At length a slight rustling sound just without the door which we had entered was audible, and in a moment all was intense expectation. We grasped our pistols more firmly and awaited the result. In another moment a small ray of light streamed across the floor, and a small panel was noiselessly opened, and a human visage appeared in the aperture. I quickly raised a pistol, and covered the visage thus displayed, but before I could speak or had even time for thought, a word and gesture from the intruder arrested my movements.

"Hist, señors!" he exclaimed, in a loud whisper, "be quiet; I have come to save you!"

"And who are you?" I asked, without removing the aim of my pistol a moment from his head. "Why do you thus intrude upon us?"

"Do you not know me?" he asked, turning the light of a dark lantern he carried so that the beams fell full upon his features.

Somewhat to my astonishment I recognized the same person who had warned me of danger. He glanced cautiously behind him, and at once closed the panel through which he had entered.

"Señors," he exclaimed, with intense earnestness, "if you will trust to me I can save you."

I hesitated. Something in the manner of the man assured me he was sincere; and yet, the whole occurrence had been so strange and unexpected, that I knew not what to think. The intruder evidently read my thoughts, for he continued, after a pause of a few moments:

"You fear to trust me—yet why? Is not my life in your hands? If I play you false, or attempt to deceive you in any manner, you can take my life without a moment's parley. Come! others will soon be here, who can murder you both with perfect ease. Will you trust to me?"

"But," I answered, "we are armed, and can defend ourselves against any attack."

He shook his head gravely.

"You know not the manner of attack. When you were placed in this room all hope was forever cut off unless assistance should reach you from without. I can save you, if you will trust me now, not otherwise."

"Then lead the way," I exclaimed, "but beware! If danger befalls us your life will answer for it."

He did not answer, but turned at once, and, opening the panel through which he had entered, he passed out; and when we had followed, and the trap was again closed, he led the way through a dark narrow passage, so gloomy that a cold shudder crept over my frame as we passed slowly along its dark windings.

We had traversed, perhaps, twenty yards when the guide abruptly halted, and pointed to a dark recess in one side of the passage.

"There, señors," he said in a whisper, "is your only place of safety. This passage," and he indicated one opening opposite the first, "leads to the barroom, and down the stairs which you see," flashing the lantern into the gloom of the recess, "will come those who seek your lives."

He motioned us within as he spoke and passing quickly away we soon heard his steps as he ascended the stairs. When satisfied that he was really gone, we proceeded to explore the place. We found the apparent niche to be in reality an apartment of considerable dimensions, and at the farther extremity we found a staircase leading upward. Beneath this we resolved to establish ourselves, and with wildly beating hearts we crawled into our stronghold.

We had not long to wait. Within fifteen minutes we saw a quick beam of light dart down the stairway opposite, and in a few moments came the heavy creaking of boards, as if several persons were descending. Breathlessly we awaited the result. In a few moments they passed our place of concealment, and by the dim light they bore we saw five villainous forms slowly and stealthily defile past. The landlord and his wife were there, as well as three strange forms which we had not seen before.

Cautiously we crept from our hiding place, and peered forth. They had passed several yards, and with quick, stealthy steps we passed the gloomy corridor, and sprang upon the stairs. A door was slightly ajar at the landing, and through this we peered to make sure that the coast was clear. A candle burned dimly upon the table, but there was no one to arrest our progress.

We entered the apartment, and here we found our traveling bags as we had left them. We looked around, but, as there was nothing we wished, we made the best of our way through the dark doorway and out upon the silent, dusky street. Here all was quiet, and as we moved rapidly we began to feel that we had at last escaped the fearful terrors behind us.

"Adieu, señors!" exclaimed a voice, as we passed a narrow alley, and in a moment the hero of our night's adventure stood beside me, with an outstretched hand. "You are now safe, good fortune be yours."

We grasped his hand, and would have detained him, but he motioned us onward, and dashing from our side was soon hid from sight. We needed no warning to hasten our steps. In a few moments we had crossed the rickety bridge, and, as we started forward a deep sense of relief was ours that we had escaped the toils of the fearful inn keeper of Sorna.

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